
MISSILE THREATS

Central Intelligence Agency Washington. D C. 20505

OCA 96-1908
23 December 1996

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Select Committee on Intelligence
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Intelligence Community has completed its classification review of the Independent Panel's report on NIE 95-19: "Emerging Missile Threats to North America During the Next 15 Years." Enclosed is the unclassified version of the panel's report. The Chairman of the ' panel, former DCI Robert Gates, testified on the judgments of the report before Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in a public hearing on 4 December 1996.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions on this matter.

Sincerely,

John H. Moseman
Director of Congressional Affairs

Enclosure

NIE 95-19: INDEPENDENT PANEL REVIEW OF "EMERGING MISSILE THREATS TO NORTH AMERICA DURING THE NEXT 15 YEARS"

Congress directed the Director of Central Intelligence to review the underlying assumptions and conclusions of National Intelligence Estimate 95-19, "Emerging Missile Threats to North America During the Next 15 Years." The legislation required that this review be carried out by an independent, non-governmental panel of individuals with appropriate expertise and experience. To comply with the legislation, DCI Deutch asked former Director of Central Intelligence Robert M. Gates to chair the Panel. The other members included Ambassador Richard Armitage, now engaged in a range of worldwide business and policy endeavors. Past experiences include service as Coordinator for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance to the former Soviet Union in 1992, Presidential Special Negotiator for the Philippines Base Agreement in 1989, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in 1983; Dr. Sidney Drell, Professor and Deputy Director, Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, Member, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, past Chairman, SSCI Technology Review Panel, and HASC Panel on Nuclear

Weapons Safety; Dr. Arnold Kanter, a Senior Associate at the Forum for International Policy in Washington, DC He has served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Special Assistant to the President for Defense Policy and Arms Control at the National Security Council, and in private industry he directed the national security strategies program at the Rand Corporation. Dr. Janne E. Nolan, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University, past senior designee to the Senate Armed Services Committee, and member of the President Clinton National Security Transition Team; Mr. Henry S. Rowen, Professor Emeritus with the Graduate School of Business Administration at Stanford University, past President of the Rand Corporation, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council; and Major General Jasper Welch, USAF (Ret), a private consultant to government and industry; he previously served as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Research, Development, and Acquisition, Assistant Chief of Staff for Studies and Analysis, Headquarters, USAF, and Defense Policy Coordinator, National Security Council Staff. The conclusions of the panel are organized under three issues: politicization, process, and presentation. These have the unanimous support of the panel members.

Politicization

Certain Members of Congress alleged that NIE 95-19 had been "politicized," implying that Intelligence Community analysts' views had been influenced by policymakers or individual policy preferences seeking to downplay an emerging missile threat. The Panel found no evidence of politicization and is completely satisfied that the analysts' views were based on the evidence before them and their substantive analysis. There was no breach of the integrity of the intelligence process. Beyond this, the Panel believes that unsubstantiated allegations challenging the integrity of Intelligence Community analysts by those who simply disagree with their conclusions, including Members of Congress, are irresponsible. Intelligence forecasts do not represent "revealed truth," and it should be possible to disagree with them without attacking the character and integrity of those who prepared them--or the integrity of the intelligence process itself.

Process

1. While the conclusions of a National Intelligence Estimate must not be influenced by policy debates or views, Estimates cannot be prepared in a political vacuum--at least if they are to be relevant. Particularly when controversial issues are involved, it is

the task of senior Intelligence Community officials to ensure that an Estimate addresses its subject matter in such a way as to anticipate questions and potential criticisms while fully protecting the integrity of the intelligence process. It also is the job of senior Intelligence Community officials to ensure that the outcome of an Estimate is not predetermined by the way in which the policy requester asks the question. While an Estimate must answer and give a best estimate in response to the question asked, senior intelligence officials must make certain that the Estimate addresses the issue in a comprehensive manner that provides both perspective and context. When the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) and Space Command quite legitimately request an Estimate on future missile threats, senior intelligence officials must recognize that the Estimate is likely to be a political football. They should take special steps to ensure that an Estimate with conclusions which may be unwelcome to a policy requester--or which alters previous judgments--provides unusually comprehensive analysis, clearly states the reasons for any change in previous judgments, explores alternative scenarios, and is candid about uncertainties and shortcomings in evidence. In the case of NIE 95-19 far from politicizing this Estimate, senior Intelligence Community managers failed adequately to alert analysts to the sensitivity of this Estimate, the uses to which it might be put in the policy debate, and thus the need to err on the side of comprehensiveness--and the need to draft the Estimate with great care. There was too much of a hands-off approach by senior management in the preparation of this Estimate. The result was not a politicized Estimate but one that was politically naive.

2. There were continuing changes in the title of the Estimate. This may have been due simply to editorial changes from original request to final draft, but also may have reflected uncertainty about the scope of the Estimate. At minimum, what were seemingly minor changes narrowed the scope of the Estimate and opened the way for embarrassing criticism. BMDO asked for an Estimate on the foreign missile threat to the United States. Space Command asked for an Estimate on the ballistic missile and cruise missile threat to North America and to theater deployed forces and allies. The Estimate ultimately focused only on North America, devoted inadequate attention to the cruise missile problem, and did not address the missile threat to theater and allied forces at all (as requested by Space Command). The failure to more fully consider Alaska and Hawaii (where, everyone knows, an attack provoked American entry into World War II] was foolish from every possible perspective. In sum, the failure to get the scope of the Estimate framed correctly set the stage for future problems.

3. After months of delay and slow work on the terms of reference, the loss of the original drafter, and the need to rework an initially unsatisfactory first draft, final drafting of the Estimate was done in haste in the fall of 1995. A likely controversial Estimate, as the Senior Review Panel warned in November 1995, that should have been drafted with unusual care and thorough analysis, was rushed to completion. This haste led to many of the presentational and analytical problems our Panel identified.

Presentation

The Panel identified a number of problems in this Estimate-- problems we elaborate below. But, based on our investigation and study of relevant documents, perhaps the most serious deficiency is that the Intelligence Community's conclusions in the NIE with respect to the intercontinental ballistic missile threat to the United States are based on a stronger evidentiary and technical case than was presented in the Estimate. The Vice Chairman for Estimates of the National Intelligence Council on October 12, 1995, and the Senior Review Panel on November 28, 1995, both warned in so many words that the analysis was too thin for such an important Estimate. While there may have been some effort to be responsive to these cautions, it was clearly superficial and inadequate. (U)

There was much that could have been added to the main text of the Estimate that would have strengthened the analysts' case with respect to the future timing of an intercontinental ballistic missile threat to the United States:

1. A review of successful ballistic missile programs in other countries such as China, India and even the Soviet Union and the United States would have shown the lengthy time required to develop and test a ballistic missile with intercontinental range (even to Hawaii). For these countries, with vastly larger resources than North Korea, their very different paths to development took many years and numerous flight tests. For example, China took more than 20 years to develop its CSS-3 ICBM. India's Polar Satellite Launch

Vehicle took more than 15 years to develop.

2. The Estimate failed to point out that development of a ballistic missile that could threaten the US ' involves two separate challenges: acquisition of the hardware and system integration. Community analysts make a strong case that even if foreign countries were clandestinely to acquire critical technologies and hardware, integrating that hardware into their missiles would be a major and time-consuming challenge, even with foreign engineering help. In addition, the difficulty of developing an effective WMD warhead capable of surviving missile launch and reentry, and integrating it onto a multi-stage intercontinental ballistic missile poses additional challenges.

3. The text of the Estimate should have presented more information on the technical obstacles to development of an intercontinental ballistic missile that could hit the United States. Some of this is in the Estimate, but much more-relating to propulsion, re-entry vehicles, guidance, staging, the technical challenges in moving from a SCUD missile derivative to an ICBM, and more--is in the back-up materials for the Estimate.

4. The Estimate did not highlight at the outset where the Intelligence Community's analysis had changed since the last Estimate and, with specificity, why it had changed. Some years ago, the annual Estimate on Soviet strategic forces began with a summarized version of what was new and what had changed from the year before. This helps the reader know what has happened and what to look for in the detailed analysis.

5. The Estimate does not highlight what elements of a strategic range ballistic missile program must be done in the open, where they can be observed with some confidence; what elements of a program the Intelligence Community believes it will know about with confidence; and what elements we may well not know about and how critical they are.

6. The Estimate was not as categorical as it could have been that there would have to be a flight test of any missile actually intended to hit the United States. No country in the world has developed a long-range ballistic missile with multiple stages without testing it, if for only demonstration purposes. (Moreover, the Panel cannot imagine any country placing a biological or nuclear warhead--using perhaps most of a rogue state's fissile material--on an untested missile and lighting it off. The risk of unsuccessful delivery or launch failure with potentially severe local consequences would be very high.) Further, virtually every flight test program for a new missile has lasted several years--no matter which country has developed it. In short, if any country is developing a ballistic missile that could reach the United States -- any of the fifty states--they will test it. The Community also would help policymakers by providing information on how long a time passed in China, India and elsewhere between the first flight test and initial operating capability (and for that matter, between the first successful flight test and initial operating capability).

7 The Estimate should have pointed out that missile development programs and weapons of mass destruction programs in other countries represent one of the highest priority issues for US intelligence agencies. As such, both collection and analysis--and estimating--will be ongoing, with regular reports to the Executive and Legislative Branches of government. Policymakers can have high confidence that any development of interest in this arena will be reported promptly. In this light, the Estimate should have provided to policymakers what analysts will be looking for as evidence of progress in such missile programs. It also should provide an estimate of minimum likely times from observation of such new development to the IOC of a deployed threat.

Although the Panel was impressed by the technical analysis and broad agreement across the Intelligence Community, and we found the Community view on ballistic missile programs quite persuasive (more so than the Estimate), there were nonetheless some very important weaknesses and deficiencies in the analytical approach:

a. Perhaps most important among the deficiencies was the failure to address adequately the motives and objectives of the governments developing missile programs, and how they affect technology needs. The brief discussion of motive focuses entirely on deterrence and prestige.

Intelligence Community estimates on weapons programs and strategic capabilities traditionally have been prepared by technical analysts. In the days of the Soviet Union, strategic forces estimates for years tended to avoid questions of doctrine and purpose, in no small part because there were no clear answers, and the issues were so violently disputed. Given the size of Soviet forces, capability was considered all-important and most policymakers did not object to the technical focus of those estimates.

With the ballistic missile programs we are seeing now, however, motive matters a great deal, and can significantly affect technology. What is required technically for a crude terror weapon is very different than what is required for a weapon that is militarily useful. Placing the issue in recent historical context, what is required in terms of guidance and control from a missile launched from Iraq and targeted simply on the city of Tehran is quite different than what is needed to hit a specific military base or target in or near Tehran. Indeed it is conceivable to the Panel that a country might assemble a missile that appears to have intercontinental range but never test it, in order to intimidate the US or other countries from taking action.

With respect to ballistic missiles of strategic range, motive and how that might affect technology is given short shrift in the Estimate because operational capability is judged so far into the future.

b. By contrast, the Panel believes the Estimate did not give nearly enough attention to the potential for land-attack cruise missiles launched from within several hundred miles of US territory The Estimate acknowledges the technical feasibility of such an attack, but discounts the likelihood because of motive--the Community thinks there are better ways to deliver a weapon of mass destruction. In sum, there is an inconsistency in the Estimate in its treatment of ballistic and cruise missiles. The former is technologically infeasible now from North Korea or Iran (or others) and thus motive is unimportant. The latter is technologically feasible, but dismissed because the analysts don't know why anyone would want to do that. (The Panel discussed several possible reasons and scenarios.)

c. This inconsistency brought us to another problem: on a challenge as important as the emerging missile threat to North America, the Estimate fails to ask a critical question: what if our potential adversaries pursue approaches--technical or otherwise- unexpected by the Intelligence Community? While in this specific Estimate the Community has a strong analytical case, the consequences of being wrong are very high. This problem cries out for an Intelligence Community commissioned Red Team, a group of technically innovative men and women challenged to explore alternative approaches that could lead to a missile threat-ballistic or cruise--to the US earlier than 2010. And to keep on doing it in order to assure there will be adequate time for appropriate US responses to any observation of a new potential threat.

d. The Panel also believes that the possibility of a sea-based ballistic missile of less than intercontinental range warrants more attention than given in the Estimate. The' Estimate's assessment of the ballistic missile threat to North America concentrates almost exclusively on ballistic missiles with intercontinental range. Consideration of scenarios involving crude Sea-launched ballistic missiles (e.g., Scud-derived missiles launched from mobile launchers driven aboard transport ships) is limited. Since developing missiles with sufficient range was identified as one of the most difficult technical obstacles which would have to be overcome before North America would face an ICBM threat, the lack of serious attention to possible SLBM threats is all the more noteworthy.

e. The Panel believes the Estimate places too much of a burden on the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) as a means of limiting the flow of missile technology to rogue states. In our view, actions by Russia and especially China to constrain ICBM missile technology transfers have a great deal more to do with evident self-interest than in international stigma. We acknowledge (and believe) that the MTCR has been a positive influence, especially in identifying key technologies, getting mutual agreement that transfer of those technologies should not be allowed, making such transfers a legitimate issue for diplomatic discussion, and imposing political costs for violators. However, compliance with MTCR is completely voluntary and each country makes its own decisions.

f. With major forces of change still at play in Russia, the Panel believes the Estimate's discussion of unauthorized launch is superficial and may be overly sanguine. All agree that a launch unauthorized by the Russian political leadership is a remote possibility. But it would appear to be technically possible.

g. In this connection, the Panel notes that deteriorating conditions inside Russia for the military, the military industrial complex, and for weapons design and engineering institutions all increase the danger of leakage of hardware and expertise that could fuel? governments aspiring to develop ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

h. In sum, the estimate too easily dismisses missile scenarios alternative to an indigenously developed and launched intercontinental ballistic missile by countries hostile to the US, such as, for example, a land attack cruise missile. It should have assured policymakers that this issue will receive continuing high priority, and that all possible technical

alternatives will be investigated vigorously and time to respond can be provided. In international affairs, 15 years is a very long time. A decade ago, the notion that the Soviet Union would collapse add disappear within five years would have been regarded by most as ridiculous. The United States cannot rule out the possibility of a strategic change of direction or policy in Russia or China--or in other countries- over a fifteen-year span of time that might lead to the sale of a long-range missile system to a Third World country. Nor can the US rule out that potential adversaries will turn to missile threats other than ballistic missiles of intercontinental range. However, the Panel believes the Intelligence Community has a strong case that, for sound technical reasons, the United States is unlikely to face an indigenously developed and tested intercontinental ballistic missile threat from the Third World before 2010, even taking into account the acquisition of foreign hardware and technical assistance. That case is even stronger than presented in the NIE.