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Human Intelligence
Robert B. Brannon

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Robert B. Brannon, Gregory C. Radabaugh, Robert A. Rosenberg, Gary L. Salisbury, Roberta E. Lenczowski, James B. Plehal, Dean W. Cash, Patrick F. Kennedy, Warren B. Rudman, Joseph K. Kellogg, Jr.

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Human Intelligence

Robert B. Brannon

February 14, 2002

Captain Robert B. Brannon is a thirty-year veteran of the U.S. Navy. In addition to the usual service at sea and in command, he worked for three years at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, helping to develop the framework documents for the Partnership for Peace, and observing plenary sessions of the Western European Union on behalf of the alliance's maritime elements. Captain Brannon was the U.S. naval attaché at the American Embassy in Moscow during the economic crash of August 1998, the armed riots at the embassy that followed NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, and the submarine Kursk *disaster on August 12, 2000. After nearly three years of service in that position, he was unjustly accused of spying by the host nation's federal security service, the FSB (formerly KGB). He was subsequently expelled from Russia on March 27, 2001, in a round of diplomatic reciprocity following the arrests of Robert Hanssen and John Tobin. Captain Brannon has an M.A. in international relations and is a Ph.D. student at the Catholic University of America, where he is studying world politics and working on U.S.–Russian relations in the war on terrorism. He is currently a national security fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Following this assignment, he will hold the Chief of Naval Operations chair at the National Defense University's National War College.*

Brannon: I'm passing around some background information that you can flip through while I'm talking if you want. It includes some relevant news clips and a piece of a transcript of a video that I'm going to show you later on in my presentation.

My subject today is human intelligence: HUMINT. Because of that, let me just emphasize something that Tony has said, and that is the sensitive nature of subjects that are not quite security breaches, but very close. If you interpret them in a certain way, they can certainly come back to bite you in a big way even though they are quite legal. So please help me with that. If you quote something and I see it in the press later on I will deny everything. That said, I've tried really hard to edit a presentation that I think will come as close as possible to telling you some of the stuff that I know you're in this course to learn about. I am not unlike many hundreds or thousands of people who have gone before me as military attachés all over the world. My only distinction is that I was thrown out of Russia. The list of people who have met that kind of fate is mercifully short.

I'm going to cover a couple of principal points, and then I'm going to wind up with the punch line, which is how I got expelled. I'm going to sprinkle my presentation today liberally with sea stories. I think they have a tendency to make things a little more real for people, and I know that many if not most of you in this room have walked a few miles in those shoes and can identify very quickly with some of what I'm about to tell you.

Oettinger: Before you go on, are you interruptible?

Brannon: Very much so. I have some prepared remarks, but I think that I'll refer to them less than a third of the time. Hopefully you will have many questions, so please feel free to interrupt at any time. My bottom line is that I want to go where you want to go.

I think that what I bring to the table in this course is fairly recent experience in the field with collecting and processing human intelligence in an era when times have been tense and the environment somewhat hostile, so I can talk about that. Let me start by saying a little about what human intelligence is. Let's say that your objective is to read a newspaper in a foreign country, so you walk out of your office at the embassy in Moscow or Beijing or wherever to the corner kiosk where they sell newspapers and you buy one and bring it back to your desk and read it. That's simply open source intelligence. That's information. Anybody can use anything that's in that newspaper. All you did was go out and buy a newspaper and read it. That's one kind of information that becomes intelligence.

Let's say hypothetically you choose to exploit a space asset and photograph the newspaper in some fashion, blow it up, and read it in that way (not that it's applicable in a practical sense, but I'm just trying to illustrate a point). You'd be doing the same thing, but you'd be doing so with imagery intelligence.

Let's say, instead, that when you buy the newspaper at the corner kiosk you engage the fellow who sells newspapers in a conversation about the front page of the newspaper. That's human intelligence. It's not necessarily valuable. It might be valuable to somebody, and less valuable to others, but if you engage this person in a conversation about a subject of interest to you or to your country, and he comments on it, that becomes human intelligence and you've just collected that.

Oettinger: Photographing a newspaper from space is also an example of intelligence gathered at excessive cost in a completely inappropriate sort of way. I underscore that because the question of who should collect what by what means is by no means a trivial question, and while that one happens to be patently absurd, it illustrates that collection strategy is itself not a trivial problem.

Brannon: I have a sea story that I'll get to in a few minutes that speaks directly to that issue of the relative priority and how you expend your assets—how you make your decisions on what sort of source you decide to use for what purpose. Sometimes you can make huge mistakes along those lines.

Why is human intelligence important? Why does it matter? What is its value? Sometimes it's exciting, but more often than not it's mundane. Information obtained from a person is usually

used in the context of a greater whole. It almost never stands up on its own merit—it is just one piece of a puzzle.

A story illustrates this point very well, I think. Something that is relevant in today's press is the crisis going on between India and Pakistan. One area that is of particular interest to me is how Russia sees this. India is Russia's best customer. They do a tremendous amount of arms deals there. It is quite open and above board. That has always been a subject of interest to our country.

When I served in Moscow, Russia had engaged in a long-term contract for the renovation and rehabilitation of some Kilo-class diesel submarines that they had sold to India some years before. They would sail, or sometimes barge, these diesel boats to a shipyard consortium in St. Petersburg, where they would be dismantled, rebuilt, and then sailed back to India. This was done with great profit to the Russian arms industry. That was a subject of keen interest to the U.S. Navy at the time I served there.

At one time there were rumors that the repairs weren't going very well, and that there were a lot of problems with the shipyard due to graft and corruption, particularly one fellow who was alleged to have skimmed off the money that India had paid and used it for other purposes and consequently had not done the work he had contracted to do. It didn't surprise anyone there. We felt that an indicator of this might be an extension of the contract.

One of my collateral duties when I served in Moscow was to serve on the board of directors of the Anglo-American School, which is simply a diplomatic entity that trains our schoolchildren. There was a branch up in St. Petersburg, and the students included not only U.K. and U.S. kids, but also some Indian kids. During an episode when we were keen to find out whether or not this contract had been extended to continue to repair these submarines, I made a trip to St. Petersburg and managed to work in a side trip to the school wearing my school board hat. During the tour, I engaged a couple of Indian high school students (siblings) in a conversation, and invited them to comment on how much they liked the school and whether or not they would be returning next year. Both of them echoed very quickly that, although they missed their buddies back in India, they were pleased that they would be able to stay in St. Petersburg for one or even two more years and how their dad's job had gotten more complicated. That's human intelligence. I took that back and contributed it to a report which lent credibility to the rumors that Russia was in fact having trouble with that contract. It was announced in the press about two weeks later, but the United States had the benefit of having that information ahead of time. That's human intelligence, and that's how it works.

One question almost everyone has is: How do you assign credibility to the information you get from another person? How can you tell if it's real or a con? This is of course very subjective. It is at once less complete and yet much more rich in detail than other aspects of the "information" industry, if you will. The easiest way to determine authenticity is to see it with your own eyes. This is what Dr. Oettinger was referring to, I think, when he talked about assigning relative priorities to how you get information. Do you use technical means, or do you use a person to try to find out? There's really no substitute for looking a fellow in the eyes and asking a question. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to spot some of the easy signs of evasion.

This speaks to the technique of elicitation. How do you get someone to talk about something? Generally speaking, I have found that most people like to talk. All you have to do is give them an excuse, and I'm more than happy to do that. There are other ways. People whom you talk with routinely can develop a trend of credibility. You can begin to keep files on certain people and you try to correlate down the pike whether your information was accurate or not. This helps you to pick out people who might be what we call "dangles": people who were put in there by the host nation's security service to ascertain your true mission. I'll get back to that a little bit later in the context of how I got thrown out, because that was one of the causes.

Nonetheless, I tried to develop a group of contacts that I used as sources. I felt that I could speak to their credibility on the basis of their position, what kinds of things they did, how they reported to me, whether I thought they were out for ill-gotten gain or were simply interested in my friendship, or whether they wanted something down the pipeline, like a visa to the United States, for example. There are ways you can tell whether a source is credible or not. The proof is really in the pudding. The collector of the information rarely if ever gets to see the report card. The case I described about the Indian situation with the shipyard in St. Petersburg was a little bit unusual in that I found out a couple of weeks later that my information had proven to be accurate. Usually you don't find that sort of thing out until much later, if at all.

Oettinger: The point he's making here deserves to be extended to all sources, because, although there's a tendency to lend greater credence to technical intelligence, that's usually misguided and it's usually done by people who don't understand the technical stuff. It's like believing computer printouts. If the computer printouts are made by Enron's accountants, they have far less credibility than computer printouts made in a more reputable fashion. The salvation—and you'll hear and read much more about this in the course of the semester—is multiple sources, so that one thing corroborates another. It's very much like scholarly or scientific research: getting trustworthy evidence is not easy, and it's almost never the case that a single source can be totally trusted. Your own eyeballs receive cover and deception as well as a technique that everybody uses. So the most extreme skepticism is necessary, and it's not limited—and that's the point that I want to emphasize—to HUMINT. Everything that you've heard from Captain Brannon is true of the most sophisticated technical sources as well.

Brannon: Here's an example that you don't always have to go looking for something. Sometimes a source just lands in your lap and immediately you're very uncomfortable with it. During the time I served in Moscow we were actively engaged in NATO's military intervention in Kosovo. I know that all of you are very familiar with that episode in our history. One of the odd aspects of this is that we had no diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. All those links were broken at that time, so there was no official conduit for communication. This goes back to the movie *Thirteen Days* and the business of Frolov.[1] Some of you may remember that story, when he managed to contact a member of the press.

The embassy of Yugoslavia was functional in Moscow; in fact, the ambassador was Slobodan's brother, Bogdan Milošević, one of the most unsavory characters I have ever

[1]The chief of station at the Soviet embassy in Washington during the Cuban missile crisis. Absent an official answer to U.S. concerns, Frolov contacted a member of the U.S. press and passed on his country's views in that way.

encountered. This story goes in the category of "I've got friends in low places." The defense attaché felt compelled, no doubt due to directions from his nation, to establish some sort of communication with the U.S. embassy in Moscow. He couldn't legally do it, because the United States had a proscription against official communication with them at the time. They made an exception for the military attachés. I've never been quite sure why, but I think the reason was one of expedience—again, friends in low places. If you've got to have them they might as well defend themselves, at least in the military. At least, that was the theory. Since the defense attaché was a Navy captain, at least ostensibly, it fell to me to befriend him. As it happens, he approached me and we developed a relationship that lasted about five or six months. He called up and we arranged to meet at a local restaurant and he fed me information that his government wanted our government to be aware of and there was no other conduit to provide it.

So was that intelligence? I don't know. That was more on the side of policy. There was precious little intelligence information in anything he told me, but he did throw a few carrots out there, like the locations of mass graves, which the United States felt very interested in and some of which is being used right now at the court in The Hague. Nevertheless, that's an example of how an intelligence source can be used for diplomatic means. In this case, I never went looking for it and I found the entire episode a little distasteful, but it was for God and country, I guess.

Back to the comment I made earlier about "most people like to talk," I guess that in a way it makes them feel a little bit more important; certainly more valuable. I found that, more often than not, all I really need to do was to be in the right place at the right time with the right question. One of the things that a human intelligence collector must be ever mindful of is what the client wants. What is your customer looking for? In my case, it was primarily Navy stuff, but it often extended into other areas. Nonetheless, I usually traveled with sort of an agenda in mind, whether it be the Indian submarines in St. Petersburg or contraband in Vladivostok.

During my three years in Russia I went to Vladivostok fifteen times. That's a long trip, but it's well worth it. Vladivostok is a navy town, and it's a place where I always felt very comfortable. It was like a treasure chest for me. Once I got off the airplane, the taxi queue was usually populated by navy guys looking for a second job just for extra cash. There was nothing else to do. So it was easy enough. It started right on the ride in from the airport. I would get in a cab and start a conversation, like "Why are you working for a cab company?" "Well, because I haven't been paid in six months!" "Why not?" "Oh, the admiral absconded with all the paychecks and is building a new dacha!" "Is that right??" That's kind of how that goes. That's serendipitous information. He might be throwing a carrot out.

Oettinger: A little parenthesis is the contrast between what you're describing and the Soviet period when your predecessors were restricted to X kilometers around Moscow and here you're taking a trip to Vladivostok. Do you have any sense of comparison?

Brannon: Let me tell you, that rule is still in place in both countries. It's forty kilometers outside the dead center of the city, but we don't have to have permission, we simply have to tell them. So forty-eight hours before I get on the airplane, I have to notify the Ministry of Defense of my intention to travel beyond forty kilometers. We still abide by that rule. It serves our interests to do that because of what we can do to them in this country. That said, they could not say I could not

go to Vladivostok. If I get outside my box too far and find myself on a military base they could arrest me, but I can go to Vladivostok as much as I want. Vladivostok is now an open city, whereas it was not an open city in Soviet times. They can make life very difficult for you. Two sea stories from now I'll get to the very difficult nature.

Vladivostok is a treasure chest for anyone who speaks Navy. I could just walk down any street downtown and strike up a conversation with any number of people, and I never failed to come away from that experience with far more information than I could even process. It was a great place to go.

That said, I tried to go with an agenda, with a point, something that was of interest to them. One of the things that was top ten on our country's hit list was the expropriation of weapons of mass destruction to North Korea. North Korea shares a border with Russia. There's a small vignette to illustrate the point. It always amazed me that the people you see working in the gutters in Vladivostok are not Russians, they're North Koreans. North Koreans jump the border in droves to work in Russia, because they consider it a land of plenty. I'll let you chew on that for a while: How desperate must you be to consider Vladivostok a land of plenty? First of all, the electricity doesn't work.

Oettinger: Let me put that into the context of an experience in Leningrad in 1958. I had a cab driver who described the Soviet Union to me as "a country of unlimited impossibility." So to come to the land of unlimited impossibility as the land of plenty just boggles the mind.

Brannon: It does. It always amazed me.

I tried to collect local newspapers that had articles that talked about the subject I was interested in. So, if it was something about deals with North Korea, or the North Koreans being present in the city, I would find something in the local press that spoke to that. There was a ferry in Vladivostok; actually there are many ferries, but there was one in particular that ran between a construction hall that we suspected of running contraband. We couldn't prove it, but it was maintained by FESCO, the Far Eastern Shipping Company, and was rife with corruption. The governor of Primorsky Krai at the time, Nazdratenko, was seriously in bed with that company, and we suspected they were trafficking in goods from North Korea, some of which went *tick* in the night.

In any case, I used to hang out on this ferry fairly regularly, just talking to anybody who would talk to me. You can't do that too much, because you're under constant scrutiny and you really don't want to tip your hand. If you find the right newspaper article and you time your ferry with the shift change, and you get someone who's a little dry and wouldn't mind a drink, you can work all of those factors together and really come home with all the information you're looking for. What I would do is go out on the ferry at just about the time of the shift change, so there would be a big crowd coming on to the ferry, and it would be difficult to tell that I didn't get off. I would hang out on the rail with a newspaper under my arm and wait for a fellow who looked reasonably sober—at least sober enough to talk to me, and that's not always easy at the factory shift change; some of them have been drinking all day at work. I'd just get next to him on the rail, look at the newspaper, look at the water for a while, bring the newspaper out, point to it, rattle off a little street Russian that sounded like I knew what I was talking about, and all of a sudden he'd

just gush. I had struck a nerve. “Yeah, can you *believe* this guy? What’s the country coming to? What’s to be done?” Then I’d just start on something else and everything else was history. There are a million and one ways to get people to talk, and none of them involve movie tricks. It’s all pretty easy.

What comes next is what do you do with it. People often ask how you get information back. It’s not necessarily perishable. There are exceptions to that, but more often than not information is not so timely that you can’t afford to wait until you get home to get it back. It’s not like it is in James Bond movies You don’t go around with all sorts of high-tech gadgets in your pockets that would help you connect with your country somehow. It really comes down to just finding little ways to remember the information, taking notes, and trying to do so in out-of-the-way places so that you don’t look like you’re taking notes when somebody is talking to you. That would obviously break off the conversation.

Oettinger: Go to the bathroom.

Brannon: Thank you for that. I was going to tell you a little sea story about getting caught one time taking notes in the men’s room. There was a group of people in the Versailles Hotel in Vladivostok, and the subject of discussion was a reduction in state subsidies at shipbuilding plants nearby, and how employment would continue and how they might be able to continue to produce defense materiel. There was a group of people from the government as well as some Russian navy guys who were kibitzing in the background. Anyway, I was there with our consul general and a reporter from *Newsweek*. The reporter was taking some notes, but I was getting in a conversation with a fellow off to one side. I went into the men’s room, closed the door in a stall, spread out my papers, and started writing down everything the fellow had just dumped on me, because it was full of information, like numbers of welding rods and how much money equated to how much steel. These were things that I just couldn’t handle, so I needed to get it committed to paper, and I chose to do so in that fashion. The *Newsweek* guy crashed into the men’s room, and, not seeing my feet, made the mistake of opening that stall door and seeing me with my papers spread out all over the place. He was completely abashed and red-faced and ran out and it was clear to me that he was doing the same thing I was: he wanted a private place to write his notes down. So it was like, “Okay, next.” It can be very difficult to find a way to do that.

I guess the point I’m trying to make is that not only do you have to get it back, but it’s also a whole lot different doing this for real in the field than it is from the comfort of a desk in Northern Virginia someplace. It feels very different to be having this conversation in a different language in a fellow’s own turf. You know you’re being watched, you know it’s important information, your country needs it, you don’t want to get arrested, you don’t want him to get arrested, so you need to find a way to remember this information accurately. There’s nothing worse than reporting inaccurate information; it’s better to report no information. Those are some intriguing aspects of that plight.

That leads kind of naturally into talking abut surveillance. As I mentioned before, attachés are constantly subject to surveillance. They’re covered by diplomatic immunity. They carry a little “Get out of jail free” card. At the end of the day there is really nothing they can do to you except take you to an airport and ask you leave their country, and there are very specific ways of

doing that. Some are acceptable and some are not. Everybody knows the way the rules are played. Attachés do their job in country in a completely overt fashion.

If you compare my mission to that of my counterpart in Bonn, for example, what he would be doing would be completely acceptable, would raise no eyebrows, and in fact, he would be encouraged to do so. If you try to do that in Russia or China, these are nations that still regard any information as deleterious to their national security, and so everything is a threat to them and every attaché therefore must be a spy. Because of that, surveillance is constant. They never leave you alone. Usually in your home town—in Moscow, for example, in my case—it was not so visible. They rarely bothered me there, except when I was meeting with that fellow from Yugoslavia whom I mentioned earlier. Every single time he called me there was a guy on the corner when I walked out the door to go meet him. It's pretty easy to spot these fellows: there are usually two, on opposite sides of the street, one team ahead of you and one behind you. When you turn, they turn. It's not that hard. I even had a guy in a restaurant behind me raising his newspaper to hide his face, and then lowering it, and then raising it, and then lowering it…. It doesn't get much more flagrant than that.

I would take this opportunity to emphasize that nothing that we do over there is covert. Nothing that we're doing over there is clandestine. It really is designed to be as overt, as cooperative, as possible. That said, if you can't get it from them in a friendly fashion, you're going to get it from them in some way. It's not like you're breaking any laws to do that. What you're trying to do is simply be able to report accurately what's going on in the country. It's just that some countries consider that to be a greater threat than others.

Oettinger: There is another counterpoint to what Captain Brannon is describing. As he says, there is overt collection by a military attaché, and everybody assumes that attachés gather information. That's accepted, it's open, et cetera. It's harder, of course, to find an account of covert gathering. Given Captain Brannon's reminiscences, you might find it useful to look at what I think is a reasonably reliable account of a more undercover type of activity. It's not a hell of a lot different in some respects from what Captain Brannon is saying, but in detail it is, and so if you're interested in going in somewhat greater depth than you get today, I urge you to look at *A Spy for All Seasons*.[2] It will round out your view. There is, of course, a huge literature on this, but, as Captain Brannon has pointed out, the James Bond end of it doesn't get you anywhere. It's really hard to tell how reliable many of these stories are, so you've got starting points, one direct from the horse's mouth, the other a reasonably reliable printed source, and beyond that you're on your own.

Brannon: Nobody can confirm or deny that stuff, least of all a fellow in academia, so I won't go there.

We talked before about priorities and how to collect information. I've saved my two best stories for last. Let me tell you a story that is long but worth going through, and then I will lead into the videotape that I brought with me, which is a different story. I think both of these are well worth your time.

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[2]Duane R. Clarridge, with Digby Diehl, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Scribner's, 1997).

In 1999 we were very concerned that there might be some arms trafficking between Russia and some of what we at the time called "rogue states." Now we've sort of replaced that dialogue with the "axis of evil" dialogue. We were very concerned that there was some trafficking going on with missiles and missile systems and missile lock systems that were getting into the hands of people who we definitely didn't want to have them. There were several different sources confirming this information, but so far they had fallen somewhat short, and without going into too much detail, let me just say that technology isn't always what it's cracked up to be. Technology has limitations. Imagery, for example, has limitations that I won't go into. Suffice it to say that it can't do everything, at least not all the time.

There was a ship that had sailed from Amsterdam and was destined for Murmansk, and we suspected that while in Murmansk it would take on some cargo that was related to these suspicious arms shipments. They decided ("they" being the people I worked for) that it would probably be worthwhile to send someone up to have a look. That doesn't always work, and the intelligence community knows that. It usually ends up with a dialogue over risk versus gain; some of you I know are familiar with that. It's where you ask yourself if it's worth it. Do you want to risk losing this resource? Is the information you need valuable enough to risk that? In this case, they decided it was.

To cut to the chase, they sent me to Murmansk to have a look during the time the ship was there. You mentioned the rule about forty kilometers earlier. In this case, the tipper about the ship's location occurred well inside the forty-eight-hour requirement to notify the Russians that I was traveling outside of that range. We decided—we being my ambassador—that this might be worth tempting fate a little bit, so what the embassy did was doctor a piece of paper a little bit that made it look like we were faxing the Ministry of Defense correctly as to my travel, right on the forty-eight-hour requirement. Of course, due to the inefficiencies of Russian communication, it didn't quite make it to the fellow's desk inside the rule. It actually showed up about an hour before the flight. Nonetheless, it gave me at least some ruse that we had complied with the rule. I had a nice little copy of that in my trouser pocket, with the date stamped that reflected compliance with the rule. I won't go into how we did that.

Anyway, I showed up in Murmansk, got off the plane, and strangely enough there was no one there to meet me, which led me to believe that in fact they didn't get the word. So, so far it was working. I dumped my gear at a hotel, didn't check into my room, but just left a bag with the desk, and left them my passport, which I was required by law to do. Light in the north in February, at least light that is good enough for photography, is very, very limited. It only lasts about an hour and a half to two hours, so I had a pretty narrow window to work with. I knew that. I went out in front of the hotel and grabbed a cab. Once again, as luck would have it, it was a navy guy, so we had a lot in common and talked about that on the way. It was *Dyanezashitnikov* in Russian, which is "The Day of the Defenders." It's a day that's celebrated with heavy consumption of alcohol and anything else that you can get your hands on, so this guy was already well looped.

I sort of put together a story on my way in the cab, and said, "Why don't we stop someplace where I can buy some flowers, because I'm very moved by the depth of your observance today, and I would like to place flowers at the feet of the memorial that's up on the hill above the harbor

there" (oddly enough, it was collocated with the ship). We stopped and got flowers, and the guy was just really with me on it. He was rapidly becoming pro-American. So I said, "Take me up there and wait while I place the flowers at the memorial, and I'll be right back." It was about minus 40º centigrade, which oddly is about the same as Fahrenheit. That's when your breath sticks to poles; you don't actually have to lick the poles. It was very, very cold. There was bright sunshine; you couldn't ask for better conditions.

The cab stopped on the opposite side of the monument. The monument is what the Russians call an Alyosha; Alyosha is the guy with the AK strapped across his chest defending against the invasion of the Nazi horde (in this case) or whoever else. Anyhow, I walked around the foot of the hill, nestled right between the feet of Alyosha (each foot being about the size of this table, so it makes a nice little shadow), and from his toes I could see directly down the hill into the harbor. Again, it was completely serendipitous, but it was an intelligence bonanza. Bright sunshine, ship in question readily identifiable, name on bow, cargo barge alongside, cranes operating, and boxes going across every which way, a couple of which were open to view. I shot off all the film I had, loaded it back in my backpack, and took some notes. The whole episode took me about ten minutes. I got back in the cab, "Very moved by your observance, thank you so much," tear in eye (it's easy to do that when you're coming into a cab after being outside in minus 40º). This guy was ready to become my brother. He wanted to do anything I wanted him to do. Nonetheless, I didn't really need him. I had everything I needed.

Mistake one. I should have collected my gear, gone straight back to the airport, and caught the afternoon flight to Moscow. I didn't do that. I decided that I had struck up this conversation so well that I would pursue this. It was stupid, stupid, stupid. I spent the afternoon with this guy, and was introduced to friends of friends of friends, and finally got to some people who were really valuable and important for me, and, as luck would have it, had some terrific conversations.

Meanwhile, the bad guys had just now found my passport, gotten the note, and Wow! They were all over the cab driver, unbeknownst to me (until later). I was out to dinner by now with the friends of friends. I came back to the hotel at about 10:30 at night, and I was definitely showing the wear and tear of dealing with Russian friends in restaurants, i.e., I had drunk a lot. In any case, I stumbled off the elevator on the fourth floor on the way to my room. Every time I went to Murmansk they put me in Room 435. In talking with other colleagues in Moscow I found out that every naval attaché stays in Room 435. How odd! In any case, it was probably well wired.

I stepped off the elevator and rounded the corner into my corridor, and there was a welcoming party of five guys, video cameras, bright lights, clipboards, a couple of guys with weapons—a huge show of force. I was cold sober in a nanosecond. That's probably about the only time in my career tour that I was really just a little bit afraid, because when you have something like that happen to you, not in Northern Virginia, you look around and nobody speaks your language, and you've got guys with weapons, and you're thinking to yourself, "Just what *are* they going to tell my wife? What story will they concoct to make this seem like it was the right thing to do?"

Nonetheless, I took a deep breath, and made a couple of conscious good decisions, one of which was not to speak Russian, speak only English, play dumb, make them work, and make them take the time to think about what they were going to say. That gave me more time to work

myself. I tried that, and showed them my little note. Oddly enough, they didn't have a copy. They seemed to know what was going on, but they didn't have a copy of the note. I said, "Let's just compare notes. It's no big deal." That bought me a little bit of time, but it really didn't work. I convinced them to turn off the lights and video camera and stop taping me, or else I wasn't going to say another word. I guess they decided they wanted to hear what I had to say enough to stop that, and so they did, but every time I turned around there was guy with a mirror in front of me and a guy with a video camera behind me, and what I discovered was that he was doing this without the lights. He was taking a picture of the mirror. Meanwhile, I'm sure they had other technical means in the corridor that I couldn't even see, so I think all of that was just show, just to intimidate me.

It took about five hours to get through this episode. At about 3:30 in the morning they finally left me alone, let me into my room, and said they would be back at first light, which is about 11 in the morning, and that if they couldn't prove in communication with Moscow that my letter was genuine they would escort me to the airport and of course report my conduct and protest to my embassy. They never showed up. I decided on my own to go back to the airport and take the next flight out, which I did. I was unencumbered during the rest of the trip.

If they really want to get you, they can do so in much better ways. I'm going to show you a videotape in just a second that talks about how I got thrown out. It reminds you of how long they have been making book on you.

Let me jump ahead to 2001, about the January–February timeframe. Robert Hanssen had been arrested in the United States and accused of espionage. It was a big story. Russia wanted to do something in response, and, grasping at straws, they arrested a 24-year-old graduate student named John Tobin, who was going to school in Voronezh—a small, out-of-the way provincial town—even though Tobin had done nothing wrong, really, except brag a bit to a potential girlfriend in a bar and probably overstated his case, no doubt for reasons known only to him. Nonetheless, he got himself caught. The embassy thinks that the FSB [Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopaznosti—Russia's federal security service] planted some dope in his apartment. There's really no evidence to support that he had been running dope; he wasn't the kind of guy to do that, but of course it's possible. We'll never know that. More important, in the days after he was arrested, the FSB, as if following a well-choreographed script (wink, wink, nod, nod), moved through a series of stages where they progressively got worse and worse in their allegations about what Tobin was doing. Finally, they uncovered that he had been a sergeant in the Army Reserve, had been a Russian linguist for some years, and was working in Bosnia during the Dayton Accords, so they figured, "He must be in this country now as an intelligence asset. He can't possibly be here as what he says, as a graduate student. Furthermore, we think he's working for the embassy." Where they got that we'll never know, but nonetheless, little stories in the press began to crop up saying that he might be working for me—by name. We laughed this off and thought it was no big deal, until meanwhile the diplomatic game got bigger and bigger. If you want to read up on this, it is all in the clippings I passed around to you earlier.[3]

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[3]CNN.com, "Russian Diplomats Tied to Hanssen Leave U.S.," [On-line]. URL: http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/03/21/us.expels.russians.02/index.html (Last accessed on April 20, 2002]; Peter Baker, "Russia Says Envoy Being Expelled Is CIA Officer," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 2001, 20; "FSB Brings Spy

In the third week of March, the United States threw four Russian diplomats—three military and one civilian—out of Washington. Within about seventy-two hours, the Russians reciprocated by throwing four of our guys out of Moscow. We then ratcheted it up with a list of forty-six more names to include a total of fifty, and they took about five days before they did the same. In the second tranche was the Russian naval attaché, so there was no doubt that they were going to throw me out. In fact, when they published the list on March 27, it had all three principals on it: the Navy, Army, and Air attachés, all the O-6s at the embassy. All of us were thrown out, in addition to all the guys who were working the Nunn–Lugar programs; all of the cooperative threat reduction (CTR) line, which is astonishing. Talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face! Once again, this illustrates that I really don't think that anyone on the political side of the house, in Moscow anyway, had anything to do with that decision. I don't think they helped make the list up. I think this was all done by the security services, which is absolutely consistent with the way both sides work. In the United States, I'm sure you'll remember, the FBI was getting a broader and broader audience about, "Hey, let me tell you what these guys are doing in our country!" The Russians were doing exactly the same thing, so harassment shot up.

The month of March was dicey. Coming home from dinner late one night with my wife in a defense attaché office car we were mooned by a group of skinheads at the gate while they were inspecting the car for bombs and stuff. These guys just came out of nowhere, and dropped their trousers. That's a very unpleasant experience when you're all dressed up coming home from dinner with your wife. She's a good Navy wife and took it well, but nonetheless that's hard.

At the same time, a fellow named Igor Sutyagin, who had been a good friend of mine for a number of years, had been arrested for espionage, and a show trial was concocted to plant a lot of evidence on him to make it look like he really was working for me. He was a submarine researcher at Sergei Rogov's Institute for Canada–USA Studies, so you may know the name. In any case, Igor and I did share a lot of information. You'll see him on this tape, and you'll hear a phone call (at least one) between myself and Sutyagin that they got by bugging my phone. Igor is still in jail. You can review his case on the Web at http://www.case52.org It's unfortunate. He has two little girls, he's a good man, and I don't think he ever did anything wrong. But much like Pasko,[4] which is a story you're probably more familiar with out of the Russian Far East, Sutyagin had begun to meddle in the area of environmental disasters. He was doing so with a fellow named Josh Handler, who was a graduate student from Princeton doing research in Russia.

The FSB put all those names together, put together the connection with me, spun a little web around Tobin, and all of a sudden they built a case that they thought was dynamite. Unlike the other forty-nine names on the list, the roulette wheel stopped on my name, and they decided to make me the scapegoat. So on the eight o'clock news on March 27 of last year, they broadcast this story, which I'll show in just a few seconds, and basically lambasted me as an example of the evil empire incarnate and all that it represents. Let me show you the tape. This is in Russian. Let

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Mania to Television," *The Moscow Times*, March 29, 2001, 3; Patrick E. Tyler, "That Russian Espionage Tape Was Not Quite All It Seemed," *The New York Times*, March 30, 2001.

[4]Grigoriy Pasko, retired Soviet navy captain, is a well-known environmental activist in Vladivostok.

me have the whole tape run, and then I'll go back and give you a couple of highlights. You have a transcript in your packets there.[5]

22 270301rtr 8 p.m.

The Foreign Ministry today officially warned the US Embassy today that 4 US diplomats are to leave Moscow in 10 days as they are announced non grata. One name is already known, it is Paul Hollingsworth, head of the sector of CIA network of intelligence agents in Moscow. You will probably learn the name of another diplomat from our report.

Camera shows a man making a phone call from a street phone; caption: FSB's operative footage.

Voice: Hello?

Man: Hello, Robert, this is Anatoly from Krasnoyarsk. I brought what I promised to you.

Voice: Do you know where the Zoo restaurant is?

Man: Which restaurant?

Voice: Do you know it?

Man: Which restaurant, Zoo?

Voice: Zoo.

Man: Zoo? Where we were ... ?

Voice: This is opposite the Barrikadnaya [Metro station].

Man: All right, O.K.

Presenter: This is how routinely appointments are made between the agents of the US military intelligence in Moscow and his curators from the US Embassy. This man is Anatoly Popov. In 1976 he was sentenced for an attempt to hijack a plane from Frunze; after servicing 12 (13?) years' term, he remained to live in Krasnoyarsk and worked for many years as an

[5]Translation by the Washington Post Moscow bureau; it has flaws.

AP stringer for Siberia, and dreamt of emigrating to the US. In 2000 destiny made him meet with Robert Brannon at the US Embassy in Moscow. According to US laws, former terrorists are strictly forbidden from immigrating into the US, but Brannon promised his help to Popov in exchange for information of defense significance.

Anatoly Popov is being alleged by this commentator to be a fellow whom I recruited to spy, that I paid him a lot of money, and they're talking about the kinds of information I got out of him. Popov is basically relating a story here saying, "This guy Brannon kept wanting to meet with me, and being a good Russian patriot I didn't want to do it."

Anato1y Popov, fag in hand: For example, there's a navigation chart of the Yenisey river, it runs into the sea, there is a map of mine fields there.

Presenter: Brannon did not come to Zoo restaurant at Barrikadnaya. You can see the operative footage now as he walks around the side streets between the restaurant and the Embassy.

That's the guy tailing me in the Moscow street, photographing at the same time. Notice he's got me making the rendezvous in different outfits. That always bothered me a little bit. You'd think they'd do a little better than that when they put the tape together.

Instead of him, two Embassy employees met with Anatoly Popov at the restaurant.

Here is Mr. Popov. He's wearing a wire. The audio is the conversation that's taking place between him and two fellows who purportedly are working for me. Actually, they didn't. Both of these guys worked in POW/MIA [prisoner of war/missing in action] affairs. They had nothing to do with this, nothing whatsoever. Popov is trying to help them gain access to something that they quite legitimately had a contract to do, and he's portraying himself as a legitimate contact in that regard. Nonetheless he's taping the conversation. If you hear the audio, you hear my voice superimposed onto this. I wasn't even in the room, but they've got me taped going in, and they've got Popov telling the FSB that I'm recruiting him, so they put all this together.

The US Navy officers were first pretending not to understand what agent Popov was saying.

FSB footage at a cafe:

Popov: Sailing directions of river Yenisey—I got it. Next, I agreed—of course I don't have it yet—the map of mine fields of Yenisey's delta.

American (?) with an accent: This is of course interesting. You know, I'll give you some money.

Presenter: Embassy employees gave Popov 400 dollars and asked him to get in touch with Brannon again. But after this meeting the agent of the US military intelligence decided to come clean at the FSB. He says he is afraid to go to jail again.

Now he's saying, "Look, I already sat in prison for fifteen years; I don't want to go back, despite Brannon's efforts and all his money." They put my business card on the air, so I got e-mails from all sorts of strange people. Here I am in front of the embassy, meeting with Igor Sutyagin. This is John Reppert, who is executive director here at the Belfer Center, and I'm escorting him to a meeting at the Ministry of Defense.

Student: Which Russian network was this on?

Brannon: This was RTR, Russia's state television and radio broadcasting company. It was not one of the free ones.

This is money they found in Sutyagin's office, to the tune of $15,000. They said it was buried in the floorboards. You'll see a steno pad that actually came from my desk, with my handwriting on it. They're saying that's evidence I was giving information to Sutyagin in exchange for information he was giving me.

This is the American embassy, and that's my apartment right there. That's simply the satellite dish we used to get AFRTS [Armed Forces Radio and Television Service] on. They're claiming that my apartment had this satellite dish on it that enabled me to communicate on special channels.

This is a tape of a telephone conversation between me and Sutyagin discussing arms on the *Liman*, which was a Russian reconnaissance vessel sitting off the coast of Albania during the Kosovo war.

Sutyagin: I wanted to know if you received the fax with information I was trying to send?

Brannon: Yes, I did, and the best thing was that envelope. I wonder if you know anything about Liman.

Sutyagin: Members of the crew are armed with guns, the ship itself has no weaponry on board.

Brannon: Possibly there are shoulder-launch missiles on the ship?

Sutyagin: To activate such missiles, it takes a sort of a platform and there is no such equipment on board, so there is no weapons there.

Brannon: Good, I got it.

It's amazing how they did all this. They must have been taping stuff for years to have a vocabulary rich enough to do the kind of cutting and pasting they did to make this work.

> *Presenter: Soon Sutyagin got arrested. After the name of the Navy attaché was mentioned at court hearings, Brannon hastily left Russia just in case, as you see on operative recording.*

This is poor Igor in jail during his inquisition, and then this is me leaving. They're saying that right after he was arrested I fled the country.

Now you hear an FSB guy talking. The tape shows my apartment, and he's saying, essentially, "This is where Brannon concocted all these evil acts against our nation. This is why America is such a threat to us, why they can't be trusted, and in the coming days you will find that Russia will reap its just rewards against this fellow." This is the day before they expelled me. He signs off as "a hearty patriot on your behalf. I'm speaking from RTR, that wonderful news agency."

> *Presenter: When all calmed down, he returned and recruited Anatoly Popov. Russian counterintelligence officers say that according to international intelligence community rules, recruiting of former criminals and terrorists, particularly on the Embassy premises is bad taste. But it is noted that American special services are not too particular in their activity.*
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> *//end//*

This is just an example of what they can do. To get this tape out of these guys, we had to pry it out with an official letter signed by the ambassador. They weren't going to give it up, but I begged the old man to help me get it. I said, "You've got to give me at least one souvenir from this ugly episode," and he managed to get it.

Let me just close by saying that this is the way things like this are done. Popov is a classic "dangle," in intelligence jargon. He had been planted about six months before this expulsion thing came down to try to create a relationship with me so that they could say I recruited him for money, and he did so by calling my office and trying to speak to me about something he thought I would be interested in. Here's a case where a source is not credible, is perhaps threatening, and could be even dangerous. We're not totally stupid. So I never once met with the man, but obviously they can make their own evidence if they need to.

If you look at some of the press clips I gave you, the night this happened was the longest night of my life, even worse than Murmansk. This is what it was like to be hounded by the press, if you'll forgive me. I must have had fifteen phone calls an hour. I finally got tired of that, and got the Marines at the switchboard to help me cut those guys off. One guy caught me at a weak point and got me to talk to him, and I made a few statements that showed up on CNN the next day. I made the *Early Bird* three days in a row. I was on Admiral [Vern] Clark's short list, and that's not the place a Navy captain wants to be. It was a very uncomfortable position for me for a while.

Nonetheless, all I said, and you'll see it quoted in the press article here on March 28, was that we're just a bunch of guys trying to do a tough job in a tough country. There is nothing covert about what we're doing. I have no idea how they made this tape, but when they don't have the evidence themselves, as you can see from what they showed on the TV that night, they can simply make it up.

That wasn't so big a deal. I think that at one point Admiral Clark, the CNO [chief of naval operations], said, "Why don't we just hang our comments on what he said" ("he" being me) "and make no further comment confirming or denying what he might have been doing." At times like that, you get kind of cold. That's what you feel when you've been expelled. You don't know whether you're a hero or a goat, because you got stuck. "How come nobody else got caught?" Nonetheless, they gave me ninety days to get out of the country, which is a big difference from PNG (persona non grata), which is typically seven days. That was a negotiated deal between both sides, so they could have ninety days for their guys out of Washington as well. There were schoolchildren involved and some other things. Nobody really cared. As long as they had a list of expellees, that's all they really wanted, so they were happy going back. So at 1:15 on June 28 last summer I left Russia, and I can't get back in.

That's all I have to say. Questions? Comments?

Student: Will you ever be able to go back?

Brannon: Maybe someday.

Student: I worked at the CTR this summer, and I met one of your colleagues, and he actually got permission to go back to Russia.

Brannon: But the State Department won't let him go back? That's exactly what's happening. This is a well-choreographed ballet. Both sides are playing by the same set of rules here. At such a point in time as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia decides to get together and decides to agree to a solution to this, they'll resolve it. Until then, it doesn't matter. The CTR guys will be pleased at that, and the Russian Ministry of Defense will be pleased to have it. But they're not going to budge.

Student: When you got back to your hotel in Murmansk that night, did they take your camera and your film and everything?

Brannon: The stuff in the backpack? No, this was the old "drawing a circle around yourself and letting no one inside that circle." This is training that many of us have had before for that sort of situation. I never let them touch my backpack. It was still slung over my shoulder when I came back to the hotel. I never let it out of my sight, nor would I let it out of my sight. I would sleep with that stuff. There was no way I would let them unzip that, even though there were vigorous efforts to get it away from me. They did not succeed.

Student: What exactly does "vigorous efforts" mean? Two guys with a machine gun?

Brannon: Shoving, pulling. They never did that with the machine gun. They can't. I know the rules they're playing by as well as they know the rules. There was a cat-and-mouse thing going on here. I might have been scared and intimidated right up front, but it didn't take long to get my bearings, collect my wits, and play the game the way I know it ought to be played. So I decided very early on to ignore the weapons. There was no way they were going to use a machine gun on me.

Oettinger: I think it's important to dwell on this for a moment, because it illustrates, to my mind, a fundamental difference between (I hesitate to use the word) the sort of civilized ballet Bob is describing and contemporary terrorism, where this kind of playing by the known rules doesn't necessarily apply. The nonstate actors have their own rules, so they may be more like thugs or they may be operating outside of this elaborate realm. It's hard to grasp how rigorous all this is. It sounds a little bit nutty. They carry machine guns, et cetera, but he's not unreasonable in knowing that they're not going to use them.

I'll give you an instance which came earlier in the seminar, in a talk by Admiral Hilton, the fellow who negotiated the Incidents at Sea agreement with Admiral [Sergei] Gorshkov.[6] The agreement was entered into as a memorandum of understanding between the two navies to avoid running into each other at night in the fog in the Mediterranean, because both of them were being knocked around by the Israelis and the Palestinians and so forth, and there's no point in losing ships and sailors. So they signed this agreement that under normal circumstances they would alert each other and avoid unnecessary harm caused by a third party.

One of the charms of this agreement was that twice a year they would meet somewhere, usually in a pleasant spot—on the Black Sea or Florida or California—to catch up with each other on how the agreement to avoid incidents at sea was working. Somewhere along the line there was an episode where someone accidentally shot an American who was in East Germany driving around under one of the normal post-World War II agreements where the Russians could go into West Germany and we could go into East Germany. It was all very above board. It was well understood that this was an accident, and everybody apologized, et cetera, but still, according to the rules, something had to be done. So they looked around and used the Incidents at Sea ballet to make a measured response, which was to move the next meeting from San Diego to northern New Jersey. That gives you a sense of how this was almost courtly, especially in Soviet times, compared with the kind of stuff that goes on today. It's sort of hard to imagine, but that's the way it works.

Brannon: Another story I can use to highlight this point has to do with the submarine *Kursk*. Many of you know that that's kind of my alter ego; I have a sort of passion for developing that story. I was there when it happened, and I participated in our government's official and unofficial overtures to offer assistance. I had the distinction of being the guy to deliver the letter from Secretary Cohen to the Minister of Defense, conveying President Clinton's will and wishes and

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[6]See Robert Hilton, "Roles of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Crisis Management," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence, Guest Presentations, Spring 1985* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy, I-86-1, April 1986), [On-line]. URL: http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/pubs_pdf/hilton\hilton-i86-1.pdf

offers of assistance about three days after the tragedy took place. I had the door slammed in my face more than once, and in the ensuing nighttime hours I managed to bring a young lieutenant on duty at the Ministry of Defense to tears, which I like to say speaks volumes about my ability to speak Russian. Either I was doing it so badly that he was crying about it, or I actually managed to tug at a few heartstrings here. I was saying to him, "There are 118 lives at stake. They're running out of air. Could you live with that for the rest of your life by refusing to let me through the door? I have the biggest stick. I don't care if you like America or not; I'm the only country that can help you right now. Don't slam the door in my face." It worked. I got to deliver the letter. We were refused. They did not accept our assistance. As it turns out, it would have been useless. I'm convinced that no one survived for more than nine or ten hours after the explosions took place, and by the time the Russians actually found out where the submarine was, and by the time anybody even knew there was something wrong, they were all dead.

Student: It wasn't that far below the surface, and if the submarine were tilted on end it shouldn't have been that hard to find.

Brannon: It was 355 feet. It's vertically easy, but horizontally difficult. The Bering Sea is relatively shallow, but the exercise took place over about a twenty- or thirty-square mile area, and that is bit like looking for a needle in a haystack. That said, it does speak volumes about the conditions of readiness that their navy was experiencing at the time. They weren't very good. They were marginal. We probably had better data than they did, but that was at the time when we were still playing cat and mouse about whether or not we had submarines in the area. Very quickly I told them officially about our two submarines and had a series of shouting matches with the Russian CNO, culminating on December 12, when he gave his annual State of the Navy address before a crowd of about 150 people and singled me out as a good example of culpable evil for having destroyed the submarine. We never quite managed to get beyond that. Privately, every Russian navy guy I know readily admits that's not possible. We couldn't have done it. It would be like a Kamaz hitting a Lada, for those of you who know Russian, or like a Mack truck running into a Volkswagen. The Oscar II is an enormous submarine of huge thickness and huge proportions, and both of our subs, the *Memphis* and the *Toledo*, are relatively lightweight creatures. Had they in fact collided, they would almost certainly have met their demise, or at least received significant damage.

Student: Can you talk about this notion of the multiple disciplines in intelligence and the protocol in determining risk and gain that you spoke of earlier? Turf battles, and some sense of how those things are weighed?

Brannon: It's sort of a war between the techies and the nontechies. There are people and administrations (Tony mentioned this earlier on) that relied more on technical means than on human means, and you see this wax and wane throughout our country's history. Nonetheless, the agencies that make up the intelligence community in the United States often compete with one another both for sources and for means of collection. Sometimes they overlap, sometimes they reinforce, sometimes they walk on each other. It can be difficult. Nonetheless, I think that there is at least a concerted effort to try to get those disciplines to work correctly, and to try to sue sources to corroborate other sources, instead of to steal each other's thunder, if you will. Does that speak to what you're talking about?

Student: I guess I was trying to think through the late lambasting of HUMINT, or our failure of intelligence; that we put all our dollars and resources into more technical means of collection. How does the technical rate in terms of credibility compared to HUMINT and how is that game acted out?

Brannon: Let me steal someone else's words. Some of you might have been in the room last night during the panel at the Forum, where they were talking about intelligence leading up to 9/11, and this stuff came up.[7] They talked about George Tenet's testimony before Congress last week,[8] the idea of having hamstrung our human intelligence collectors by giving them restrictions and limits that they shouldn't have had to work with, and whether or not that contributed to an intelligence failure. That's one aspect of your question. I realize there are other aspects. Yes, there are restrictions, and there certainly were leading up to 9/11. For example, there were known terrorist cells operating in Moscow that the Russians had their fingers on and had even penetrated, and we were not able to exploit that information because of the unsavory nature of the Russian intelligence community's techniques. This was at times very frustrating to us. Nonetheless, after 9/11 the gloves came off and we were a good deal less squeamish about how we approached those kinds of things. So the boundary can move around a little bit.

Oettinger: I think this is worth amplifying on a little bit, if you don't mind. You'll be seeing walks around this in many different ways throughout your reading and throughout other visitors this semester. A key word to keep in mind in connecting with this topic is "requirements." It sounds innocuous, but what Captain Brannon is describing is often a well-intentioned, not necessarily malevolent, tug of war over the framing of requirements: what is to be collected, how much money is to be spent, et cetera. So there is the usual tug of war over money, over prerogatives, over often very honest differences of opinion over whether it's better done by this means or the other, and then there is this overlay of policy issues over what is s considered doable at a given period of time.

If you look back at the Eisenhower era and the early U-2 days, the question of overflights was not exactly settled, so the shooting down of Gary Powers is sort of the high-tech equivalent of the expulsion of a military attaché as an indicator of displeasure with that particular technical means of collection. Both sides got over that, and there's a lovely book by a fellow named Matthew von Bencke that sort of outlines the pattern of occasional hostility and occasional collaboration on space assets.[9] What happened after the shootdown was that everybody calmed down and the United States and the Soviets essentially established a regime of duopoly on space assets, agreed to lock everybody else out, agreed not to interfere with one another's what were euphemistically called "national technical means" of verification, and established essentially in

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[7]Panel discussion, "September 11: An Intelligence Failure?," Richard Butler, Brian Jenkins, Joseph Nye, Jr., Mona Sutphen, and Gideon Rose, panelists, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., February 13, 2002.

[8]On February 6–7, 2002, George J. Tenet, director of central intelligence, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on "The Worldwide Threat: Converging Dangers in a Post 9/11 World" and "National Security Threats to the United States."

[9]Matthew J. von Bencke, *The Politics of Space: A History of U.S.-Soviet/Russian Competition and Cooperation in Space* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997).

space a regime somewhat similar to the ballet regime that Captain Brannon has described for HUMINT. Over the last decade or so, as satellites in the United States and France and China and elsewhere became commercial, that cozy little Soviet–U.S. relationship has gotten much more complicated with other folks coming in, and so space is a bit more of a buccaneer's free-for-all these days. A lot of factors having to do with just the general political relationship as well as the technical situation enter into this.

The savoriness or unsavoriness of collaborators also has its ups and downs. There was a period where, because of alleged excesses by the Nixon administration in Guatemala and other places—you take your pick—in the seventies, the attorney general of the United States and the president put in certain restrictions in reaction to widespread public revulsion against what were regarded as excesses by the intelligence community. Those measures were regarded at the time as very necessary and very desirable policy actions to rein in what was regarded as a rogue operation by the CIA and others. They banned assassination at a time when allegations were rife of attempts on Castro's life and so forth and so on. It was not uncommon prior to the Levi directives (named after Attorney General [Edward H.] Levi of the Ford administration) to have the FBI infiltrate religious organizations that they thought might be harboring various subversives or whatever they were called at that period. That was regarded during the Ford administration as being totally un-American, evidence of an out-of-control police state, et cetera.

Now you have the question of radical Muslim infiltration of front organizations that might be exploiting ordinary run-of-the-mill American Muslims, and you say, "Gee, maybe we ought to be able to infiltrate those things, because otherwise we could have another 9/11." If you look at the Patriot Act of 2001 and new directives coming out after 9/11, the pendulum is swinging the other way. One needs to be concerned about civil liberties these days.

So what is allowable, whom you can befriend, and what you can collect by what means is very much a policy or political issue as much as it is a choice of technical or human means. If you lay on top of that again the questions of normal turf battles you've got a pretty healthy broth. One of the problems I have with the reading that you're doing is that some of that doesn't come across quite as clearly and forcefully as it does in Captain Brannon's first-hand testimony.

Brannon: It reminds me of the church in St. Petersburg, where the bell tower happens to overlook the submarine docks. You can't make arrangements to go to the docks, but you could try, "I've never seen those bells before. Could you show me your bells?" It's a great photography point.

Student: Going back to another question and the comment that you made about last night's forum, I thought something was probably a little bit misstated in the presentation last night on the demise of HUMINT, which actually began under Stansfield Turner in the Carter administration in the aftermath of the fall of the Shah of Iran. That led to if not quite the dismantling then at least the de-emphasis of the human intelligence structure and more of an emphasis on technical collection means. I think that point was missed. They kind of laid it at the doorstep of the Clinton administration, which, if anything, was more of a case of apathy as opposed to dismantling, although the Clinton administration did figure a ten-year downturn in the intelligence budget and resources to the tune of about 25 percent cuts overall as a result of the peace dividend and

downsizing the military. The intelligence community took a significant hit, human intelligence being a component of that.

Regarding the comment that there's still a mechanism to target unsavory groups through the HUMINT arena, I will tell you that the chilling effect carries over to even today. Maybe we'll see some change, but it will take some time, and it's really going to be stretched out over a number of years. It has really had a significant impact on the HUMINT communities. You alluded to one of the cases in particular, Guatemala, where one of the agency case officers was running a Guatemalan colonel who was accused of murdering a Guatemalan who was married to a U.S. citizen.[10] At any rate, all of these had enormous impacts on the case officers in the field. So the bottom line is, even though they may run it up the chain, and there is incredibly intense legal oversight on all of this, so it does not happen in a vacuum, there is also significant pressure for them not to follow through, because it can be seen as coming back to bite them in the end. Consequently, action does not get taken.

You further compound that problem when you look at Al Qaeda, which is a totally different issue altogether from what previously had been the case. You're actually going to need to have an asset that is part of that clan or tribe before you're going to be able to penetrate an organization like that anyway.

You didn't really get into the requirements piece. There's no way really to capture it for you, but you've got say a basket of collection capability and then you've got a bunch of fifty-five-gallon drums of requirements over here, so you're trying to rob Peter to pay Paul. The priority of the day is not set by you necessarily; it's set by somebody else. You probably are familiar with the Green Books. It's a five-volume set of collection requirements; that's probably all they're good for. They give you from A to Z every requirement that's out there for the collection system. You can't exactly travel with those things in your pocket. They have since put it on CD, but that still doesn't help.

Student: How nimble or flexible are those fifty-five-gallon drums? Clearly, as 9/11 showed us, there are things we are not collecting that we probably should be collecting.

Student: All requirements from terrorists to major theater war are in there.

Brannon: It's a matter of who sets the priorities that day, that week, that month, that year.

Oettinger: There's a subject there for a hundred term papers and more. There is report after report dealing with how to manage requirements. Let me try to outline for you what some of the questions are. You'll hear me do this over and over again this semester, because of my fanaticism regarding moderation and balances. One of the problems with requirements, et cetera, is that the question of who the customer is is extraordinarily ambiguous. There are not necessarily villains or terribly stupid people. One of my hypotheses is that when you see some apparent stupidity going on and on and on through many administrations and many incumbents, et cetera, many of

[10]Efrain Bamaca Velásquez, a Mayan resistance leader, vanished in 1992; it was later alleged that he was tortured and killed by the Guatemalan security forces. His wife, Jennifer Harbury, brought cases against the Guatemalan military and the U.S. government for complicity in his death.

whom are very intelligent, capable people, you start looking for the organic reason for this kind of nonsense to perpetuate itself. It's hard to resolve the question of whether intelligence requirements or priorities should be set by demand pull or supply push. That's a very fundamental issue. Who the hell is the client? Now, you say, "It's the president of the United States," or "It's the task force commander," or "it's the non-com in the foxhole," or whatever. You can make an argument for each one of these, but the requirements they would impose and the access they would want would not necessarily be compatible. Then you have to have somebody adjudicate that. To do that, you've got to have a bureaucracy and then things get slowed down. So this is a terribly hard problem, for which the solutions are not terribly satisfactory.

Brannon: Meanwhile you have the guy in the field just saying, "What do you want to talk to us about? I don't have room for your CD on my ship."

Oettinger: There are no easy solutions to this. My hope is that as we go through the semester you guys will acquire a better understanding of the various pieces of this in whatever realm you may be involved in, either as a civilian policymaker or as a military operator, so that you can make marginally better decisions than you would have if you hadn't taken this course. I don't anticipate miracles, but I think it's worth an effort to understand better that this is a complicated mess where there are no easy answers. If you learn that, that'll be good.

Student: Looking at Goldwater–Nichols and the responsibility and authority given to the combatant commanders, the CINCs [commanders in chief], and going back to Professor Oettinger's point about adjudication, it would seem to me that a combatant CINC's staff would have war plans, including terrorist plans, support plans, that are requirements based. In this new global war, is it the role of the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] to be the combatant commanders' adjudication authority? Does it need to be changed or strengthened at the combatant command?

Brannon: First, I'm stuck at the Kennedy School, so I don't have much insight into that right now. But let me just say what I think about that.

Russia is a country that doesn't fall into any CINC's hat. Nobody owns it, so the Joint Staff is your dad. Every other country can turn to somebody. The guys in Beijing can turn to Admiral Blair.[11] Everybody's got a dad. Russia doesn't have that, so the Joint Staff has to step up the plate and say, "This requirement is b.s., this requirement is good, et cetera." Well, more often than not they don't do that. They're either ill informed, or don't have time, or you're not in their top ten (please don't quote me, I'll get fired). That's the way it works in practice. So yes, there's a lot of work that needs to be done. We need to realign some of these responsibilities and oversights.

Oettinger: It's worse. Before you start looking for answers, let me put that in an even larger and messier context, and recommend for those of you who are interested a couple of pieces of reading. One is a book by an alumnus of this seminar named Gordon Lederman; you'll find it in the course bibliography.[12] It has a foreword by Senator Sam Nunn, and is an evaluation of what

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[11]Admiral Dennis Cutler Blair, CINC, Pacific Command.

[12]Gordon N. Lederman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff: the Goldwater–Nichols Act of 1986* (Westport, Conn.: The Greenwood Press, 1999).

the Goldwater–Nichols Act did for the military. Essentially, to oversimplify the point, it gave the CINCs greater authority relative to the services, and in many regards that was a good thing.

You'll also find in the PIRP Web site a paper titled "Crucified on a Cross of Goldwater–Nichols."[13] The author of that piece is a fellow named James Simon, who is the assistant deputy director of central intelligence for community affairs, and his view is that an unintended side effect of the Goldwater–Nichols Act has been to enhance the authority of the CINCS to the point where in setting requirements for intelligence they have all but swamped the strategic needs of the president and the NSC, et cetera, the victims being the executive branch and the policy makers and so forth. You're talking about pretty big stuff there if you're interested in these sorts of balances between civilian and military needs, intelligence assets, the spy in the field, an attaché, a satellite, whatever, and who controls them? In a situation of great exigency, if you use the asset for practical purposes and get somebody killed in the field, that's very important, but you don't then have the asset to go look at what's happening in India or Pakistan. Maybe you're using it on the strategic side. These decisions are hair-raising, from the highest level of strategy down to the most nitpicking question of "Who's over the hill? Am I going to get the assets to figure out if somebody's going to come and shoot at me?" Those two items—Lederman's book and Simon's article—I think will help you if you're interested in more detail to get a purchase on this.

Student: How does data collection, which you were doing, turn into information, and information turn into information requirements? For example, how did it get onto your desk that you needed to go to Murmansk? It seems to happen within a monolithic information community, but in essence it's a series of stovepipes with probably little cross-talk going on between them all. Where does that kind of fusion go on, and how does it reach you?

Brannon: There are two short answers to your question. One, there's really less stovepiping than you think. There's a great way of short-circuiting that; it's just the telephone. That's what happened in this case. Nobody looked in any requirements deck; nobody sorted through and connected one piece of information with another and said, "Ah! Bingo! Send this person to look at this ship." It didn't work out that way. Somebody on the NSC staff picked up the phone and called somebody over at Langley, and somebody at Langley called somebody else, and somebody else called somebody else, and before you knew it….

Student: So it really wasn't institutional? It wasn't organization?

Brannon: No. Somebody wanted to know. Somebody started with a need to know. Somebody needs some information, and somebody else knows how you might get it. You weave kind of a web there.

Oettinger: Let me take that concrete observation and generalize from it. If you look at the organization charts, nothing will work. What actually makes it work is that people pick up the

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[13]James M. Simon, "Crucified on a Cross of Goldwater–Nichols," in *Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control, Guest Presentations, Spring 2001* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy, I-01-3, July 2001), [On-line]. URL: http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/pubs_pdf/simon\simon-i01-3.pdf

phone and say, “Forget the organization chart.” What are the implications of that? One of them is that if people don’t know each other, haven’t established rapport a priori, have not trained together, and haven’t gotten to know each other informally, then they don’t know whom to telephone. What makes the system work is that there is a tremendous amount of informal lateral communication. One of the great puzzles I have is why we haven’t learned that lesson and legitimized that, instead of having a sort of underground activity. Everybody knows that’s what makes the system work, and yet we maintain this illusion about what our unworkable chains of command do.

Student: Part of what drives that is the budget process that requires organizations to justify themselves by saying, “We have X number of requirements that have generated X number of reports.” I know the Defense Intelligence Agency [DIA] and other organizations get caught in that bean-counting drill almost on an annual basis, and hopefully some of that will disappear.

Brannon: You played into my hand very well there. One of my favorite stories is how they would generate requirements after the report. Honestly, you can go out in the field and find a piece of information that doesn’t necessarily match one of these fifty-five-gallon drums, so you issue the report, and next week you’ve got a new requirement that asks for that information. It’s like, “Don’t they read the mail? Thank you very much!”

Student: Actually, what’s happened in that regard is that they’d like that piece of information, so now they want to make that kind of a standing requirement.

Oettinger: Let me go back to your question for a moment. The literature on this tends to underemphasize the analytical side of the whole effort, which turns the collected stuff into something useful. It’s hard for me to point to a good piece of literature on it, because it’s not sexy. It’s good scholarship, it’s good science, it’s weighing evidence, and it’s the most important part. The best collection in the world won’t do you any good if the stuff doesn’t get pulled together and thought about. To their credit, the agencies are thinking more these days about how to improve the analytical process. That’s another area where the question of how much you can do with technology and how much you need people becomes salient.

Brannon: One of my favorite things I used to do to give me an excuse to come back on leave once a year was to go back and coordinate with the analyst community. It gave me a chance to get my teeth worked on in a place that wasn’t going to kill me, which is nice, but I used to love to sit in a room like this and have the analysts pick my brains. It never ceased to amaze me how interested they were. It really pumps you up when there will be some guy who has spent his whole life looking at rivets in titanium hulls, and if you can say, “Yes, we went to a pier last week, and we didn’t see any of those,” it’s great.

Oettinger: But, you see, in its own way that’s self destructive, because it leads to the illusion that the customer is that analyst, and that analyst may or may not be doing something that the front office can really use. It’s a complicated production.

Brannon: The shortcuts work, though, because if that front office is interested—if Condoleeza Rice wants an answer to a question, she's going to get it, and there's somebody in that room who knows how to find the person who can get it.

Oettinger: But again, that depends. You might want to look at Graham Allison's *The Essence of Decision* on this point.[14] That works, but only within the established organizational structure, and if the established organizational structure does not lend itself to an answer you're sort of dead in the water. That process is grafted on top of the institution in being, and Allison made his reputation in that book by essentially grasping and articulating that point more clearly than it ever had been before.

Student: Rather than legitimizing that structure that you were talking about a little earlier, about going backdoor, it actually works better in a community where some people follow the rules and get their requirements met on a standing deck. For instance, there are a lot of standing requirements on SIGINT [signals intelligence] systems. Those are on the books forever, seemingly. But that leaves room for people who really can use the back door to get their requirements met when they need to.

An interesting vignette is that I worked collection management in Europe for a little bit, in an operation that was going on. If I put requirements up through the normal channels I would never get anything fulfilled, because it was lower priority, but if I called this person in California, who was the person who actually entered in the information, and got the requirement on the deck, he would e-mail me the answer within hours. If you legitimized that system and everyone were doing that, you wouldn't get that same information.

Oettinger: You're right on. There is a bit of a colloquy about that between me and Admiral Jerry Tuttle in the seminar record.[15] We agreed that creative insubordination was the way to go, but that implies that there's something to be insubordinate to. You've put your finger on it.

Most of you seem to have been at the Forum last night. I was at the lecture at the Science Center, where Professor Richard Hackman of the psychology department was talking about what makes ensembles work well. It was meant to be a lecture for laymen, so he emphasized the orchestra, but his case studies have been on airline crews and Strategic Air Command crews and so on, and what makes units work well together, and again his writings dwell on this. It comes out that his recommendations are where you're kind of positioning us. At one extreme, if you're not careful you have anarchy and nothing happens; at the other extreme you have so much rigidity that nothing happens. The best working groups are somewhere in the middle, and one of his examples is an orchestra where you don't want the conductor simply to make all the decisions,

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[14]Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (Reading, Mass.: Longman, 1999).

[15]Jerry O. Tuttle, "Tailoring C3I Systems to Military Users," in *Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control, Guest Presentations, Spring 1988* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy, I-88-1, March 1989), [On-line]. URL: http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/pubs_pdf/tuttle\tuttle-i88-1.pdf ; and "The Copernican Pull," in *Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control, Guest Presentations, Spring 1993* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy, I-94-5, August 1994), [On-line]. URL: http://www.pirp.harvard.edu/pubs_pdf/tuttle\tuttle-i94-5.pdf

but you also don't want each musician voicing his or her opinions all the time. So each section—strings, woodwinds, and so on—chooses a leader or a spokesperson to represent them in discussions with the conductor, and together that corps of seven or so decides about the tempo at which the piece will be played, and so on. The baton passes from one person to the other, so the same person isn't always the group leader. That system seems to strike the correct balance so that decisions are made effectively, and everyone feels motivated to cooperate.

Student: Regarding the JCS, do the rules have to change because people believe we didn't have enough information before 9/11? There were also things like the Chinese attack submarine that was apparently at large for a month in 2001 without our intelligence services knowing about it. There's a schism at the DIA. We now see ourselves primarily as a defensive force, involved in force protection. The old collection approach can't work against terrorism; that can't be a standing requirement.

Student: It took the World Trade Center to get that way.

Oettinger: The point you're trying to make is that we're back to Bill Colby's CIA, and that Church–Pike has been eviscerated.

Clemons: Intelligence now involves the Centers for Disease Control, local security forces, and Governor Ridge's homeland defense office.

Oettinger: There is no easy answer. There are no clear borders anymore between police, environmental, and military issues. You will spend all your careers worrying about this open question, which 9/11 put on the agenda as it wasn't before. In terms of engaging the enemy, general public. The answer is in your hands.

We've reached the end of our time, so I'd like to thank our speaker for a very interesting presentation.

Acronyms

CD	compact disk
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	commander in chief
CNN	Cable News Network
CNO	chief of naval operations
CTR	cooperative threat reduction
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FSB	Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopaznosti (Russia's federal security service)
HUMINT	human intelligence
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopaznosti (security service of the Soviet Union)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council

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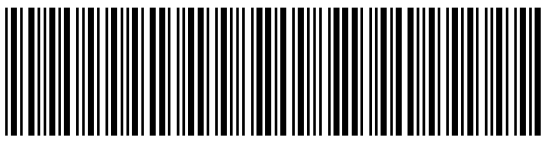

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