*INCIDENTAL PAPER*

# Seminar on Intelligence, Command, and Control

**CIA Paths Toward the Information Highway**
**Charles A. Briggs**

**Guest Presentations, Spring 1997**
Philip B. Heymann; Kenneth Allard; Denis Clift; Douglas D. Bucholz; Arnold E. Donahue; Charles A. Briggs; Anita K. Jones; David S. Alberts; Gregory J. Rattray

**April 1998**

*Program on Information Resources Policy*

***Center for Information Policy Research***

***Harvard University***

The Program on Information Resources Policy is jointly sponsored by Harvard University and the Center for Information Policy Research.





E-mail: pirp@deas.harvard.edu URL: http://www.pirp.harvard.edu
ISBN 1-879716-47-X **I-98-2**

# CIA Paths Toward the Information Highway

**Charles A. Briggs**

*Charles A. Briggs was Executive Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from 1981 to 1984, responsible for day-to-day management of the Agency. He began his 33 and 1/2 year career at the CIA as an intelligence officer, and has served in all of the CIA's Directorates, as well as in various positions reporting to the Director of Central Intelligence: Director of Congressional Affairs, Inspector General, and Comptroller. In the Operations Directorate, he was chief, successively, of three senior staffs concerned with support of counterintelligence and clandestine collection files and covert action, as well as overall Directorate program planning and evaluation. As a member of the Intelligence Directorate, he served as Deputy Director of the Agency's central reference facility and Executive Secretary of the Intelligence Community's Information Handling Committee. He also directed the Agency's central computer facility for the Scientific and Technical Directorate. He is a recipient of the Distinguished Intelligence Medal, and the author of the "Ride with Me" cassettes for travelers on the New Jersey Turnpike, I-95 through Georgia, and I-81 through the Shenandoah Valley. He holds a B.A. in psychology from Wesleyan University, and an M.A. in English from the University of Michigan, and graduated from the State Department's Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy (the Foreign Service equivalent of the National War College) and the Kennedy School's Seminar on National and International Security.*

**Oettinger:** I won't make a long introduction to our speaker, because you've had a chance to read his biography yourselves, but on this occasion I just want to remark that it's a particular pleasure to have him with us because our acquaintance goes back ... I don't know, 30 or 40 years to days when we both had more hair ...

**Briggs:** Curly, too!

**Oettinger:** ... and it was blacker and so forth. He was running a piece of the CIA, and I was sent by the White House to inquire into what the hell he was doing. We seem to have struck up a long-lasting acquaintance, perhaps friendship, dating back to that. I asked him because of that to feel free to reminisce somewhat and give you not only a picture of the world today, but also something of an historical overview. There are mighty few people around who are as able as Chuck is to give you a sense of both continuity and change in the institution and its roles and missions and so on. With that, I will turn it over to him, except for one last sentence, which is that he has agreed to be interruptible from the start with questions and comments. So, go at 'em. Chuck; it's yours.

**Briggs:** Thank you, sir. General Vernon Walters, who was at one point the DDCI and the acting Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), used to say that there are no improper questions, only improper answers. I'm sure you've heard that before.

I joined the Agency in 1952. Beetle Smith, General Walter Bedell Smith, was the DCI at that time. He had been Eisenhower's chief of staff in World War II and then ambassador to the Soviet Union. The Agency was actually created in 1947, as I'm sure you know.

Let me lay out a little groundwork for what will be, in part at least, the discussion of some of the CIA paths toward the information highway. Wild Bill Donovan, of course, had headed up the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) during World War II, and had repeatedly put the case to President Roosevelt for a centralized intelligence service, much to the dismay of the military services and J. Edgar Hoover, all of whom

originally opposed the idea. What was created first (not by Roosevelt, but by Harry Truman) was the Central Intelligence Group, in 1946. The Central Intelligence Group was headed up by Admiral Sidney Souers, and he was designated the first Director of Central Intelligence. That's before CIA existed. The Director of Central Intelligence then and today has as his primary function providing intelligence support to the President of the United States.

The CIA was established in September 1947, so this is the 50th year, and we're about to engage in a lot of hoopla celebrating that fact. I don't know how much of this will be public, but back home we're going to be involved in an awful lot of things inside the Agency, and hopefully on the outside. We had hoped that the Discovery Channel would give a fairly balanced picture of the intelligence world to the public in three programs that they just ran last night and on the two preceding nights. In fact, it turned out to be a highly slanted, anti-Agency thing, which we're terribly distressed about. We did make available the director and the deputy director, and other senior officers, who gave them a tour of the place, and in any event, hoped for something other than what I saw on TV last night.

When the Agency was established in 1947 it consisted of about three major components. There was an analytic office that was run by Max Milliken of MIT. There was an Office of Operations, so-called, which consisted of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, the organization that monitors radio broadcasts; a Foreign Document Division, which then translated—and still does today—foreign-language documents; and a Contact Division. This last one has caused a lot of controversy and has been the subject of much misinterpretation over the years because it was a domestic organization whose contacts were U.S. academicians and U.S. businessmen. They were not, in any sense of the word, agents. They were not paid. They cooperated with the Agency as patriotic citizens who had a knowledge of foreign affairs that resulted from either their academic experiences or their business experiences overseas. So it was a totally voluntary activity, but it was the subject of considerable debate later on during the Church Committee hearings, because, by law, the Agency has no domestic intelligence role. That's a role for the FBI.

In any event, on the clandestine side there was something called OSO, the Office of Special Operations, and there was OPC, the Office of Policy Coordination. Both of these were cover names that didn't really describe what they did at all. OSO was the espionage arm and the counterintelligence arm of the business, and they carried with them from OSS days the traditions of secrecy and autonomy. I'll talk about that a little bit as I go along here.

One other major unit in those early days was a thing called the Office of Collection and Dissemination, and its functions were several. It was essentially the library from the research and analysis branch of OSS. We inherited something like 50 million punchcards.

**Oettinger:** There's a gift for you!

**Briggs:** The office was also responsible for determining what the intelligence requirements of the various offices in the Agency were, as well as those in the intelligence community, and levying collection requirements on the human source collectors: on the attachés, on the Foreign Service, on the clandestine service. It was a funnel between the analysts and the collectors. As time went on, that function was modulated so that its essential focus became and remained central reference, the provision of the library services of the Agency. I say we inherited 50 million punchcards. The organizational format we had was a series of registers, so-called. There was a biographic register, as you may recall, Tony.

**Oettinger:** Oh, yes, I do, from my days on the Knox panel.

**Briggs:** There was an industrial register. There was a graphics register. In the biographic register, our job was to keep track of foreign leaders. We did that manually. We had dossiers, folders, in which we

stored hard-copy documents, and we did have a punchcard index to the holdings of the library. In the graphics register, we had ground photography, most of which had been inherited from OSS during World War II. The industrial register was, as you would imagine, industrial plants. Again, we had physical folders in which industrial plant information was maintained. It was mostly on the Soviet Union, the Soviet Bloc countries, and China.

There was a special register that nobody talked about, because that was communications intelligence. Nobody talked about communications intelligence in those days because even the existence of NSA was not acknowledged overtly, and you had to have a special clearance to have access to communications intelligence, but we had a good-sized library of that kind of material.

The main CIA library was essentially a hardcopy reference collection, plus microfilm copies of attaché reports, Foreign Service dispatches, and CIA clandestine reports. This is where we were starting to push the technology, because the system that supported those documents was called the Intellifax system, you may recall, from the words "intelligence facsimile." Somebody, I think at Eastman Kodak, had invented a machine that would take the IBM punchcard and a photosensitized paper strip and put the two together so that what came off on the photosensitized paper strip was bibliographic information that had been typed on the top of the IBM punchcard. In other words, in addition to the holes in the card, you had a frame in which the microfilm copy of the document existed. In clear-text English, you had the report number, the date, the security classification, and four or five different bibliographic citations, and those things were what reproduced on the sensitized paper tape. So in effect you had something like a AAA Trip-Tik. An analyst would ask the library for whatever we had on subject X in area Y. The machine would kick out all the punchcards and they would be put through the machine, and out would come this bibliographic tool that the analysts used to request specific documents that they would then use at their desks.

At that point in history, as you know, the Iron Curtain was up and it was very hard to get information on the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, if citizens coming across the border had something wrapped in a newspaper, the officials at the gates would take the newspaper off so that wouldn't come out to the West. It was practically impossible to get any scientific or technical literature or any military stuff. It wasn't until Sputnik went up, and the Russians decided that it was to their advantage to establish closer contact with scientists and technicians around the world, that the flood began. We talked at the time about the same information explosion that people are talking about today. I'm now talking about the mid- to late 1950s.

The explosion included a tremendous amount of Russian-language literature, and there were a limited number of people who had the capacity to handle the language. So we became very much interested in machine translation as a way of dealing with that volume. I noticed Léon Dostert's name in one of the papers you showed me. Léon Dostert was a professor at Georgetown, and the CIA and Georgetown worked together on the early stages of machine translation.[1]

**Oettinger:** I put 10 years of my life into that myself.

**Briggs:** The Air Force became very interested in machine translation. Between the two of us, we pushed it for quite some time. The CIA finally decided that it was not really economical, because the best we were able to do with a computer disk was to have an idea of what the document contained; there was nothing like a literal translation, and that just didn't seem to be productive enough for us. What we did do was take a Stenotype machine and give it to our linguist, who would translate aloud from the Russian text into a Dictaphone, and then the clerk, instead of using a typewriter to transcribe, would use a Stenotype

[1] For a history, see W.J. Hutchins, *Machine Translation: Past, Present, Future*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986.

machine. The Stenotype machine had a paper tape with impressions on it that were convertible to digital information. That tape was then fed into the computer where there was a dictionary, and out came a computer-assisted translation. So that's what we focused on for quite some time.

Because it became obvious that the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, to some extent the State Department, and we were all handling the same documents—the same attaché reports, the same Foreign Service dispatches—we tried to find a way to economize and develop intelligence community standards, or even to come up with a splitting of the pie for processing the documents. The very naive assumption in the beginning was that the Air Force would handle *these*, and the Army would handle *those*, and we would handle *these*, and we would all exchange. It was a very good theory, but it never quite got off the ground. What we did develop, however, was an intelligence subject code, and the entire intelligence community used the same coding system for putting these documents in the file for subsequent retrieval. As a matter of fact, we even briefed a number of European countries on that intelligence subject code.

**Oettinger:** You had a thing that was called CODIB of the U.S. Intelligence Board. What did CODIB stand for?

**Briggs:** The Committee on Documentation of the Intelligence Board. Under the National Security Council, there were and still are a whole series of committees consisting of representatives from the various intelligence components. Originally, it was called the Intelligence Advisory Committee, so the first such committee in the documentation world was called CODIAC—Committee on Documentation of the Intelligence Advisory Committee. It subsequently was called the CODIB when Paul Borel, my immediate boss and mentor, ran it. Today it is called IHC—Information Handling Committee.

CODIB was really pushing the frontier. We didn't have the storage capacity, so it was obvious that we all needed to go the automation route. Computers were just coming to the fore. As a matter of fact, the first computer in CIA was one used by the photo interpreters in their mensuration work. It was an old ALWAC machine. Our early computers for personnel and finance and logistical processing were RCA machines—RCA 401, 501. On the information storage and retrieval side, they were IBM machines: the IBM 1401, 1410 series.

CODIB was not only interested in machine translation; it was also looking at things like automatic abstracting, automatic indexing, and automatic dissemination. There were even ideas, nothing but theories, about sharing information technically and remotely.

**Oettinger:** Much of that has a very contemporary ring—work group software ...

**Briggs:** It does indeed. As a matter of fact, we had an interest in long-distance xerography in the, I guess, early 1960s, because in 1966 we did implement a community-wide LDX system, as it was called—long-distance xerography system.

At that time, we were all good guys. We had cooperation from academia. We had cooperation even from the East Coast press. International communism was seen to be a threat. It was believed that the long-range aim of the Soviet Union was to take over every country in the world and have an international communist domination. Everybody in this country, including the East Coast press, thought that was a bad idea, so our efforts to thwart that were highly supported. When we looked at things like cooperative information sharing, we were dealing with MIT, with Systems Development Corporation (SDC), with Stanford Research Institute, with RAND, with the national libraries of the world, with the National Science Foundation. This fellow Borel, whom I mentioned to you, was a highly credible individual in all those worlds. Burt Atkinson, I think, was the fellow from the National Science Foundation.

**Oettinger:** Burt was the fellow from the National Science Foundation. As a matter of fact, Burt just celebrated his 85th birth-

day. He's still alive. He's in a retirement home or something on the West Coast. The reason I know this is that about a year ago I spotted his name on the bulletin board of the Cosmos Club in Washington, and sent him a birthday card, and did it again this year. So we've stayed in touch. He was the fellow who funded my machine translation research here, and I found out later that it was your money. Joe Becker said that at one time.

**Briggs:** Joe is dead.

**Oettinger:** Yes, Joe is dead. Joe said that he had signed the chits.

**Briggs:** As a matter of fact, Joe Becker was the executive officer in the Office of Central Reference when I was across the street in what was a former roller-skating rink called the Riverside Stadium. We had about 400 people there in the Office of Central Reference, before air conditioning, before anything except king-sized termites and cockroaches. The cockroaches were so big in Riverside Stadium that their legs were bowed.

Actually, the reason I was there is that in addition to the functions I mentioned that transferred from OSS, the liaison function with other government agencies transferred to us. That meant that one of my early jobs was to maintain contact with the State Department and the intelligence branches of the military. As the curtain went up, and the Russians started going into the outside world, we established what was called the International Conferences Branch. So as a junior officer, I spent a lot of time chasing Russians and satellite countries' individuals going to trade fairs around the world, and capitalizing on their participation in scientific conferences. We would get a lot of literature from those to bring back for processing and input to the files for the analysts.

I was sitting there one day at my desk, and the deputy director of the office came across and said, "Are you going to apply for Joe Becker's job?" I said I hadn't thought about it at all. He said, "Well, think about it." So I did, and that's where my career development went.

Joe was sent out to California for about a year and a half to learn something about computer technology. He had been the first librarian in the Agency,[2] had been in CIG and in OSS before that, and was still a very young guy. He went out to learn about computers, and when he came back, he was made the chief of an ADP staff in the Agency. By that time, we had in fact acquired those RCA machines for the administrative processing in what was called the Deputy Directorate for Administration. There were three major components in the Agency: the intelligence analysis side, called the Deputy Directorate for Intelligence; the clandestine side, Deputy Directorate for Operations—although it was euphemistically called DDP (Deputy Directorate for Plans) in those days; and the Administrative Directorate.

When Joe came back, John McCone as DCI had decided that we needed a fourth directorate, a scientific and technical directorate. And so, a fellow named Bud [Albert D.] Wheelon, who had been out in the aerospace world, was made the first deputy director of that directorate, and he had a caveat. He said, "I want to have the computer facility in my directorate under my control." That set off a series of fireworks that lasted for quite some time. Nationally, at that point in time, there were great debates on whether the efficient thing to do was to centralize or to remain decentralized. The blood was flowing in the corridors.

**Oettinger:** For the record, that debate, as you know, continues to this day and is among the tensions and balances that continue. Nobody will ever win the centralization/decentralization thing.

**Student:** Is that debate, particularly with your agency, but also in general, primarily in terms of the technical virtues of decentralization versus centralization? Or is it on a command and control level?

---

[2] His first published book is Joseph Becker and Robert M. Hayes, *Information Storage and Retrieval: Tools, Elements, Theories.* New York: Wiley, 1963.

**Briggs:** I think it's more on a command and control level.

**Oettinger:** It's both. They feed on one another, because on the technical side there are shifts in the economies. Depending on relative costs of this or that component, it may favor slightly a more centralized or a less centralized approach, and then that sets off the command and control wars. The two are inextricably linked. If the technology were static, it might come to an equilibrium, but because the prices and capabilities keep shifting, the question keeps getting reopened.

**Briggs:** Director McCone did agree with Wheelon. Obviously, he wanted him to be his deputy director for science and technology, so he did set up something called the Office of Computer Services. Joe Becker, then, was the first director of the Office of Computer Services. But because the blood was flowing in the corridors, and because there was all this stress and strain inside the Agency, they decided that they would bring somebody else in to take over that job. At that point in time, I knew all the warring parties, and I had a fairly good relationship with them. Those of you who read the biographic sketch know that my background was English language and literature and psychology. So I was to wave a rhapsodic wand, a harmonic wand of some sort, and cause all these warring parties to stop fighting one another. But as it turned out, the clandestine service side of the house retained its own computers, because by that time Dick Helms had taken over, and Helms was an old case officer, an old clandestine officer.

**Student:** Did he take over from FitzGerald?

**Briggs:** He took over from Desmond FitzGerald, yes.

**Oettinger:** So that dates it, because you and I met while FitzGerald was DDO.[3]

**Briggs:** The National Photo Interpretation Center people kept their own computer, but that was mostly a function of their being way over on the other side of town.

Joe was kicked upstairs, and because I had spent six years at that point as the executive secretary of CODIB, I was told that my next move was going to be over there to take over the Office of Computer Services. As I indicated to those who joined me here at lunch, my veneer was extremely thin in the computer world, but I had brilliant people working with me. One fellow, a guy named Bill Eisner, whom you, Tony, probably ran across somewhere, was said to have been worth 25 programmers. He was right out of college. The only experience he had was working summers for the telephone company, but he was absolutely brilliant, and he did develop the first time-sharing program, which we then subsequently gave to GE and to IBM and to others in the commercial world to use.

I took over the Office of Computer Services just as we were making the transition from second-generation to third-generation computers. In the IBM world, that was to the 360 series. We had some analog-to-digital equipment, but what we didn't have were programmers—programmers or systems analysts. Nationwide there was a significant dearth of them. Wheelon gave me 130 slots to recruit against, which was unheard of in the Agency. So we were out competing with IBM and GE and RCA and all the rest for programmers.

Why did they come with us? I think the principal reason was because we offered a wider range of applications than they could find anyplace—business applications, scientific and technical applications, information retrieval applications—with, at that point in time, pretty sexy equipment. I had the flexibility to offer competing salaries. As a matter of fact, I had to start this fellow Eisner, whom I mentioned, at something like a GS-12, step 3, when normally people came in as a GS-5 or a GS-7—that being the way we talked about people and their

[3] FitzGerald's daughter later wrote one of the classics of the Vietnam War era: Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake; the Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1972.

grades in the government at the time. I guess we still do; I'm not sure. But it was a very challenging time.

**Oettinger:** You said something a little while ago about the role of CODIB and the aim being to try to parcel out the work among several agencies and so on. Let me share with you a perception of someone coming in from the outside at the time, which was that the aim seemed to be to maintain fiefdoms and empires and not to share information. The whole thing really appeared to be a scheme for retaining institutional autonomy in the face of pressure to integrate. I mention this again because another one of our recurrent tensions, balances and so forth, is centralization/decentralization: the eventual Goldwater-Nichols Act for the military versus the absence of a Goldwater-Nichols Act for intelligence or a senior purple intelligence service. These are open issues. I wonder if you would comment, both retrospectively and in terms of the current world.

**Briggs:** I don't think there's any question but that Paul Borel as chairman was very much interested in trying to develop this high degree of cooperation, but it's certainly true that the individual services didn't share that view.

**Oettinger:** So the tension was there?

**Briggs:** I have to say that the Navy was the least interested. Although the FBI was not interested. We went through all kinds of difficulty trying to agree in the biographical record whether you would have the last name first and then the first name and the middle initial, or whether it would be the other way around.

**Oettinger:** That's where I came in. It made a lasting impression on me because here were these guys supposedly in good faith sitting around the table arguing over which columns of an 80-column card ought to have what information. It struck me as the height of exploitation of technological excuses for institutional inertia. Was that a reasonable judgment?

**Briggs:** Yes, that was a reasonable judgment. It was indeed.

**Oettinger:** As you can see, it stayed with me for a long time.

**Student:** Did you write it up that way? Or did you let it go?

**Briggs:** I think he wrote it up.

**Oettinger:** I wrote it up. But I tell you, if we could find my memo of that time in the files in the White House someplace, it's when I discovered the phrase "ass-covering," which hitherto had not come into my pristine academic vocabulary.

**Briggs:** I served as the director of the Office of Computer Services for about three years. That was a very exciting time, as I mentioned at lunch, because the DDS&T (deputy director—science and technology) was inclined to draw everybody into the management planning discussion at the conference table, and those were the days of the transition from the U-2 to the SR-71; all kinds of very exotic, technical collection systems. We had R&D programs going on that were pushing the technology on many, many fronts. It was a fun time.

I went from there to the State Department Senior Seminar on Foreign Policy that I mentioned at lunch. I thought I was coming back to take over the Office of Central Reference, because that had been the condition under which I was allowed to go to the senior seminar. I was called back by the CIA's executive director. I thought he was going to tell me, "Okay, the boondoggle is over. The 10 months in the Senior Seminar are over, and you've got to get back to work." But instead, I walked into the office and there was a fellow named John Clark, who had been the budget director. He was about to move and wanted somebody to come in behind him. He had asked me three times before to work with him, and I said, "John, I know you too well." I really didn't want to do that, but there he was, smiling like a Cheshire Cat. He had put the case to our executive director and the executive di-

rector had decided that was going to be my next assignment.

The great thing about it was that I knew as little about the budget as I knew about computer technology when I took over the Office of Computer Services. But what I then discovered was that this was one of the most challenging jobs in the organization. Why? Because you can see all the parts. You can cut across the lines that keep you out of the clandestine side if you're a DDI analyst, an intelligence analyst. I then saw where all the money was going and what all the plans and programs were, and it was a very challenging job.

Then Jim Schlesinger came in. He had been asked by President Nixon to do a study of the intelligence community. He had some very strong opinions and strong ideas, and when he finished his report Nixon decided he'd had enough of Dick Helms because Nixon never trusted the Agency.

**Oettinger:** He didn't trust anybody.

**Briggs:** He didn't trust anybody; that's right. And so, Schlesinger came in as the new Director of Central Intelligence. He served five months, and then he was appointed Secretary of Defense, as most of you probably know. In the meantime, he just came through with a meat ax and slashed and burned. The morale of the Agency sagged to the bottom of the pond. However, much of what he did needed to be done. It was just the way in which he did it that we were not enthused about. He, of course, not surprisingly, having run the AEC (Atomic Energy Commission), was very high on accelerated movement into the technological world. As a matter of fact, he was looking for direct television links between the White House and the Agency, and between the Agency and the State Department, et cetera.

So he did catalyze a lot that was desirable, but unfortunately the Watergate issue came up. I don't know if any of you remember hearing through a fellow named Howard Hunt about the Agency furnishing a red wig and otherwise supporting the plumbers. So Schlesinger said, "What else have you done?" He sent a notice to every single employee in the Agency, overseas and domestic, saying, "I want you to tell me anything that you're aware of that was illegal or improper." Back from this came what we subsequently called "the Family Jewels."

**Oettinger:** All the stuff that Colby eventually published?

**Briggs:** That was the stuff that Colby eventually published.[4] Colby took over from Schlesinger when Schlesinger left to become Secretary of Defense. This collection went all the way back to the beginning of the Agency. It included things like the unwitting drug testing. It included the mail intercept activity. It included all of those things that came out subsequently in the Rockefeller Commission investigation and then the Church Committee investigation.

**Oettinger:** There's a published report. We'll insert the reference to the Rockefeller report and the Church report.[5]

**Briggs:** Bill Colby at that point was the executive director, and he was the one who had to pull all of these things together for Schlesinger. Then Colby submitted them to the Congress in a career-destroying context. He didn't inform the White House first. He informed the Congress first. Well, you don't do that. You particularly don't do it if Henry Kissinger is the advisor to the President on intelligence matters. So Bill was fired, and Bush came in.

---

[4] William E. Colby, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978.

[5] Rockefeller Commission Report (Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States): U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Hearings on CIA Foreign and Domestic Activities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975. Church Committee Report: U.S. Senate Select Committee on Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Hearings and Final Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

**Oettinger:** Colby is on the record in this seminar not long after that, so you can look that up.[6]

**Briggs:** Before all that happened, while Schlesinger was still there, he decided that the Agency needed management improvement, so he decided to create a new directorate called the Deputy Directorate for Management and Services. He took all of the administrative functions and put them in that directorate, and he also took the budget function. I feebly argued against that, saying that the President's Bureau of the Budget is outside of any single cabinet officer's control for good and sufficient reasons. Mr. Schlesinger did not agree with me, so I found myself for a brief five-month period working for Jim Schlesinger. That was ironic, because my deputy at that time was a fellow who had been our budget examiner, and I had taken a trip around the world with him. As a matter of fact, he was a partner of Arnie Donahue's.

**Oettinger:** Who spoke here last week.[7]

**Briggs:** This fellow with me was a guy named Jim Taylor. Jim at the time was a young officer in the Office of Management and Budget. He had a good head on his shoulders; he was very articulate. I got to know him well when we took this trip around the world. When I got back, there was an individual who handled the budget over on the clandestine services side, and the then-DDO needed somebody to fill in for him, and he asked for the fellow who was at that moment my deputy. I said, "I can't let this guy go, because I'm not a budgeteer, unless I can talk Jim Taylor from OMB (the Office of Management and Budget) into coming over and filling in for him." That worked. It worked because Jim was going to get a two-grade jump out of the move, and it turned out to be a very satisfactory arrangement from my standpoint. Beyond that, I thought it might have some other advantages because we knew Schlesinger was coming over to be DCI, and I knew that Jim Taylor knew Schlesinger. Besides, Schlesinger had five kids and I had nine and I thought, "He's got to have a heart." He didn't have a heart. It didn't make any difference at all that Jim Taylor knew him and worked for him, or that he had five kids, or that he smoked a pipe, or that his shirttail was always out. He was a very hard-nosed individual. As I said, he was there for five months.

**Oettinger:** His wife, Rachel, was a Harvard classmate of mine.

**Briggs:** By this time, I had made my argument with Schlesinger about locating the budget function under him and lost, but when Colby took over from him, I felt that it was okay for me to go back and put the case to Colby, saying, "This is not a good idea from the Agency's standpoint, and why don't I do something else." It was at that point that I went over to the clandestine side of the house.

There was a very low morale situation in the automated file system that they had developed. I was supposed to raise that morale level and also bring some of the previous CODIB technological planning thoughts to their function. What they had built years before was something called the "Walnut system." I don't know whether you remember that one.

**Oettinger:** Yes, I remember it: an IBM system.

**Briggs:** An IBM system, unique to the Agency. It consisted of a tub, sort of like the old-fashioned washing machine tubs, with a photosensitized paper strip in slots arranged by the phonetic name grouping system that they had developed. As you can imagine, if you've got a Soviet name passed to a French agent, who has a Dutch handler, who is talking to an American case officer, you've got a considerable variation in spellings of that name by the time it gets

---

[6] William E. Colby, "The Developing Perspective of Intelligence," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, Guest Presentations, Spring 1980.* Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, December 1980.

[7] See Mr. Donahue's presentation in this volume.

back. The name "Tchaikovsky" has 26 different spellings. The name "Briggs," I have found, has 17 different spellings, depending on whether you have it spelled with a single G or a G-E-S or what. Obviously, if a case officer wanted to know what we knew about a guy he's planning on going out to recruit, he wants to know everything we have about that guy, regardless of how that name was spelled. So that was why IBM developed this so-called Walnut system. Incidentally, IBM put up 50 percent of the R&D money at that time—something I can't imagine their doing today.

**Oettinger:** Yes, monopoly hath its advantages. AT&T paid for a substantial portion of AT&T's largesse to the Defense Department (well, the taxpayer, or rather the phone user, did ultimately). In monopoly days you could do things that you don't do in competitive days.

**Briggs:** I don't know whether it was part of your group, but when the PFIAB, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, did beat up on the intelligence community for not being sufficiently advanced in the ADP world, it was decided that a system then in operation at NSA would become the community standard for information retrieval activities. That was the COINS (Community Online Intelligence Network System).

**Oettinger:** Oh yes, we were very active in beating the community into submission on that one.

**Briggs:** I had moved on and I never did know whether that really took.

**Oettinger:** COINS was fought to its dying day, and in a sense it's still fought. There was a fellow named George Hicken, now retired, who was in charge of it for many years, and whom we tried to support. But this is an issue in any organization. It doesn't have to be an intelligence organization. It happens in a bank. Walk into any bank and ask them whether they have a system that will enable them to know all aspects of their relationship with a particular individual or corporate client, and you will not find a bank where that's true. It's partly technical difficulty, but it's partly that the trust officers and the lending people and the various departments don't want to relinquish their relationship and their control. You've just read Allard,[8] and this whole question of the relationship between the services that Allard discusses in the reading has its parallels in the corporate world, in the academic world, and in the intelligence community world. We spent 20 years trying to keep COINS alive and functioning, and toward its end it essentially became the repository for unwanted databases that agencies were willing to share with the enemy, meaning other agencies.

**Briggs:** Of course, one of the problems that we had in CODIB was that we had these ideas on automatic abstracting and indexing and dissemination, but the technology wasn't there for a lot of it, particularly the technology for storing vast quantities of information. I can remember when we went out to Stanford Research Institute or SDC, one fellow out there had the concept of a theater commander having in his hand a computer that would tell him what to do, and all it required was about a trillion bits of storage capacity.

**Oettinger:** But you see, here's the problem. You're getting close to a trillion bits, but the appetite grows by what it feeds on. Consider the contemporary character of the remarks that Chuck is making, and go back to the reading at the beginning of this semester in that piece of mine that opens up with how come there is this sense of progress while at the same time there is a sense of *déja vu*—you've been there before.[9] It's exactly this phenomenon. By now, we have accomplished many times over what was being yearned for in the days that

---

[8] C. Kenneth Allard, *Command, Control and the Common Defense*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.

[9] Anthony G. Oettinger, *Whence and Whither Intelligence, Command and Control? The Certainty of Uncertainty*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, 1990.

Chuck is talking about, except the appetite has grown.

**Briggs:** Except for computer security. We tried to interest IBM and GE and all the rest of them in computer security way back in the early 1960s, and they thought this was a problem unique to NSA and CIA, and so why should we put money in it? It isn't profitable.

**Oettinger:** That remains a struggle today.

**Briggs:** One of the problems directly related to both storage capacity and security is that we had many more people in CIA who had the special clearances than existed in the military intelligence components. Yet we were all aiming toward what we called "all-source files," that is, files that included not only the Top Secret and Secret human source reporting, but also the communications intelligence and the reconnaissance intelligence, which at that point wasn't being talked about at all. It wasn't being acknowledged that there were satellites, or that the U-2 photography and the SR-71 photography was of the quality that it was.

Add to that the awareness that the open sources were a mine of information. George Marlow of CIA had been pushing for years for increased attention to overt scientific and technical literature. It made all kinds of sense, particularly if you're talking about the proper use of your clandestine human collectors. There is no logic in their collecting information that's easily available elsewhere, either through the Foreign Service or through open literature. We had a very active, what we called "publications procurement program," with attachés in the embassies who were out there collecting foreign-language documents to be sent back. Again, both from a language standpoint and a volume standpoint, we were being buried in it. It used to be a joke that the *New York Times* furnished so much information that the Russians wouldn't be able to handle it. What people didn't appreciate was that there was a Russian institute that had at its disposal over a million human beings who could translate documents and make the information available to the Soviet scientific institutes.

**Oettinger:** Yes, although that also had its strange effects. I wrote a paper on one of the stories about the Russian supremacy in this area, because it was alleged that we were unable to translate their stuff, and therefore were 10 years behind and so forth and so on.[10] It turned out that it was a paper that I had translated in my doctoral thesis as an example, and I knew that all five people in the United States who could possibly have given a damn had seen that paper within a month of publication. So, the budgeteering claims of 10-foot-tall adversaries remain another issue. Today, it's always couched in economic terms more than in military terms.

**Briggs:** But we didn't have the capability technologically to guarantee in an all-source file that those who were not cleared, let's say for U-2 photography, would not be able to get at that file. But it was desirable to have it all there for those who had the clearances, so that when they produced the President's Daily Brief or other papers for the policy makers, they would have the benefit of everything that was there.

**Oettinger:** I think that, if you look over the history of the seminar, that aspect of things seems to have come more or less under control. It's not an issue that is as burning. If you look at the complaints, for example, about the Gulf War, it was less about accessibility in principle than about the ability to distribute stuff the last quarter mile. Again, in that sense, it's interesting that there is progress; that is, headquarters had stuff that would have been miraculous in the days that we're talking about here, so the complaints shifted to a lower echelon where the guy said, "Hey, you've got it at corps, you've got it at division, but you don't have it in my tank or in my airplane."

**Briggs:** In Dick Helms, as I said, you did have a professional, career clandestine officer whose whole experience in OSS and in the clandestine side of the house was

---

[10] Anthony G. Oettinger, "An Essay in Information Retrieval or the Birth of a Myth," *Information and Control,* Vol. 8, No. 1, February 1965.

erecting the barrier to make sure that those who were not privy to or didn't need to know something didn't know. He was very leery of a computer world where all this data is stored (at that point on a disk that somebody could carry out). I heard him say at one point, "If I have to go back to the quill pen to protect the sources, I will do so."

The very day I took over the Office of Computer Services, I was called up to the Director's conference room, and there were Helms and his deputy, and the general counsel, and the inspector general, and all of these very, very senior people. I was informed at that point that two tapes were missing from the tape library. Welcome to the Office of Computer Services! As it turned out subsequently, the tapes, like library books, had been misfiled, although Jim Angleton, the chief of our counterintelligence service, never believed that. And he shouldn't have! His job was to be skeptical of things like that. But that was a rather rude introduction to that new function.

**Oettinger:** Again, it illustrates the oddity of the perception of technology's role in that respect, because Ames walked off with paper documents. It's the same thing. It's a physical security breach, and the details of whether the vehicle happens to be a tape, or a piece of microfilm, or a paper document is sort of irrelevant. Good practice is good practice, regardless of what the technology is. Interesting.

**Briggs:** I went from that world, where I spent about four years over on the clandestine side, to the IG's office, first as deputy, then as the inspector general. I certainly would recommend to anybody an experience in an IG office as well as an experience on the Hill, in a congressional office, no matter which agency you're part of. I think anybody who rises to the more senior levels has to have that kind of experience; otherwise, he is in fact going to shoot himself or the organization in the foot.

**Oettinger:** Are you going to spell that out a bit more?

**Briggs:** That he would shoot the organization in the foot?

**Oettinger:** No, the value of the experience.

**Briggs:** Again, it's because of the scope, and your perspective obviously differs depending on where you're sitting. Something that you can see categorically in black and white terms sitting *here*, looks entirely different over *there*.

**Oettinger:** Yes, but I think it would be helpful to us if you could compare or contrast the overview you had, say, as comptroller, with the overview you got as inspector general. You're describing the latter as yet another dimension, and I don't think either the class or I grasp what you have in mind.

**Briggs:** Of course the focus of the comptroller job is purely financial, and although you do see all of the things that the moneys are going to, you don't necessarily understand the context, or the ambiance, or all of the rest ...

**Oettinger:** The warm, furry stuff.

**Briggs:** The warm, furry stuff, right. In the IG's office, my functions were several. They were to conduct periodic reviews of individual components or activities. They were also to respond to big problems. I'm delighted I wasn't there when the Ames case came up, but I was there when the Ed Wilson case came up. Ed Wilson was a former Agency officer, a very bright, very competent, very creative guy, who went sour (well, not sour; he got very greedy) and sold some materials to Khadafy. He ended up in the pokey, which is where he belongs, and that's where he is right now.

I also had the audit function as IG. There, of course, the comptroller develops the budget and provides the money; the audit staff looks to see whether it is being appropriately spent. So long before we had the oversight committees, we had in-house inspector general and audit activities. We had the Office of Management and Budget

aware of all of the things that we were doing. We had the two committees of Congress: the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee. There was actually more oversight of CIA prior to the development of the oversight committees in the Senate and the House than there was of any other government agency in town. As a matter of fact, we had an inspector general as far back as Beetle Smith's day in 1952. I guess the military services had always had inspectors general, but most government agencies in Washington did not have them. Stuart Hedden from Wesleyan was our first inspector general.

**Student:** Does the inspector general now report to the oversight committees, or does he still receive instructions and give reports to the DCI?

**Briggs:** Up until the current inspector general, whose name is Fred Hitz, the IG had been an in-house developed responsibility and individual. But from Hitz on, they have been appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. So he does, in fact, report to the Congress.

That has both plusses and minuses. Up until that time there were only two senior officials of CIA—the DCI, the Director of Central Intelligence, and his immediate deputy—who were appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Obviously, those two positions then can become politicized. Prior to Bush, they were not. There was a deliberate effort made to try to see to it that the Director's tenure didn't coincide with the change in the administration. However, since Bush, and probably for the foreseeable future, it will remain politicized. In addition to the IG now being a politically appointed person, there is a plan on the Hill to make the general counsel also a politically appointed position.[11]

**Oettinger:** And now the deputy director for community affairs is also subject to Senate confirmation.

**Briggs:** The only real reason for having a CIA is to produce a disinterested, objective piece of intelligence for the policy makers. If we can't do that, if it is a politicized product, then in my judgment we ought to abolish the Agency.

**Student:** You mentioned the politicizing. When Bush came on line, is that because of the cabinet member position for the DCI, and that opened up the whole realm of politics?

**Briggs:** He had been chairman of the Republican Party. He had a political role in the election, and I've forgotten exactly what that was. Ironically, he was the best prepared DCI that we ever had, as a former ambassador to the U.N. and a former Congressman. As a matter of fact, one time, I think it was right after the Privacy Act was passed, Representative Bella Abzug had a hearing up on the Hill. Bush was the DCI, and he was to go up and face her very impressive performances in the Congress. I don't know if you ever saw her on TV, but I got a call, and I was told, "You're going to go out to California, meet the Director, fly back with him, and brief him on the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act." So I did, and the following day when he was to go up on the Hill, the news media people were just rubbing their hands. They couldn't wait for him to get in there and have Bella dig her long fingernails into him. What they forgot was that Bush had been a Congressman, and members of Congress don't treat one another that way, regardless of when their tenure was. Within five minutes, the media persons were sitting on the floor smoking cigarettes, bored to death.

As time went by, we learned as an agency that we didn't have the unique, special status that we had had for those first 25 years. The things that turned it around more than anything else, obviously, were the unpopularity of the Vietnam War and Nixon's pulling the rug out from under the Presidency. So it became a different kind of world. It wasn't as much fun to get up in the morning and go in, even though I told you at lunch that there was only one time

[11] Author's note: This had become effective by mid-1997.

period, during the Church Committee, when it just wasn't as much fun.

Colby, when he became Director, recognized the changed environment in the country. Because the computer world was also becoming an integral part of everything, and because the computer world costs so damn much when you added the computers to the technical collection systems and their costs, it behooved the Agency to start doing something it hadn't seriously had to do in the past 25 years, and that is, do some longer-range planning, do some prioritizing.

**Oettinger:** That's interesting. In a sense, if I hear you right, you're saying that that increased capital intensiveness of the operation, even with the collection systems.

**Briggs:** Yes, indeed. I've forgotten what the fiscal year was, but because Johnson was pressing everybody to reduce their budgets or keep them level, the Bureau of the Budget had told us that next year's budget was going to be at the same level as this year's budget. Colby had a session in the auditorium where he talked to the managers in the Agency. He said, "Look, here are the increased personnel costs" (at this point in history, again, we had to start competing with the outside world in terms of salaries and perks), "and because of the cost of inflation and the cost of technology here's the way the curve goes. Here's where the ceiling is. If we continue on this path, we'll have no money left for operations, so we've got to start prioritizing." That's when management by objectives, or zero-based budgeting, or some of those terms, came to the fore. It was a traumatizing experience for the Agency. Back in the Allen Dulles days, when he went up on the Hill, he took a piece of yellow paper (foolscap) with him, and he wrote a figure down and showed it to the chairman of the committee, and the chairman said, "That looks like it's about right," and that was our budget hearing. Now, contrast that with what the military services had to go through from the beginning, and what the State Department has always had to go through. So when we finally got into the real world, it was fairly traumatizing.

On top of it, first came these investigative hearings, and then the Freedom of Information Act. Now the name of the game in intelligence is "need to know." It is secrecy. As I said a moment ago, espionage overseas is illegal in the host country. It is an activity that practically all the countries of the world still feel they have to have, and we feel that we have to have. We have to have it in the future, even though the Soviet Union is no longer there. But it's bound to draw a lot of attention and a lot of brickbats. So the need is to start looking much more realistically at secrecy, at classification. There's no question that documents had been overclassified, or had retained classification for much longer periods of time than were really required. Colby started talking about real secrets versus convenient secrets, or bureaucratic secrets.

**Oettinger:** Just to put that again in context, within the last month there was issued a report of the so-called Moynihan Committee on Secrecy. I will get you the exact citation by the next session, because some of you may find it useful for your term papers.[12] Again, that is another issue that is alive and well 25 years later.

**Briggs:** Then along came the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Up until the time that act was passed, following the revelations of the Church Committee where the Agency, in fact, did keep files on U.S. citizens, contrary to the law, anybody who thought he might have been in those files submitted an FOIA request. So we went from 6 FOIA requests in a year to 150 a day, and that pattern has been maintained ever since. The backlog has built up to thousands of requests.

**Oettinger:** When was it that you got stuck with the job of dealing with them?

---

[12] Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy (Moynihan Commission), *Secrecy*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997.

**Briggs:** That was about 1974. Again, I was "Lucky Pierre," because I had come from the overt side of the house. As I said to you at lunch, as long as we were not arbitrary and capricious in the way in which we used the exemptions the law allowed, we won our cases in the courts, but the amount of time that goes into that, taking time away from either collection or analysis, is absolutely staggering.

**Oettinger:** Was this immediately after your stint as inspector general?

**Briggs:** It was before my stint as inspector general. There was one point where I was in litigation on 65 cases at the same time. One of the deputy attorneys general had a session for the government as a whole on the FOIA, and I thought I'd better go and listen to him. Afterwards I went up and introduced myself to him. His jaw literally dropped about half an inch. He said, "I've seen that name on so many legal documents that I thought it was a generic pseudonym."

**Oettinger:** Like Betty Crocker?

**Briggs:** Exactly. As a matter of fact, I almost did go to the pokey, I think, at one point because there was a case in southern California of an ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) individual who was suing for all the documents having to do with the country from which he originally came. He knew what that country was, and of course we knew what that country was, but we also knew that that country didn't want an acknowledgment of a liaison relationship with us. The judge involved was the judge who was involved in the Pentagon Papers. He had gotten burned by having in-camera review of the materials and said, "I'm never going to do that again." So he was the one who was inclined to have this case go to court. We walked through my scenario with the lawyers. When I get up there and the attorney says, "Is this country X?" my lawyer says, "Your honor, I instruct my client not to answer that question." And the judge then says, "I understand that, counselor, nevertheless, I direct him to answer that question." If I still don't answer the question, I'm in contempt of court. "That's all right," said my lawyers, "we'll have a Presidential pardon in our back pocket."

**Student:** Trust me, right?

**Briggs:** I said, "What happens to my pension?" In any event, the thing was settled out of court, and I didn't have to go through all that.

So now what we have is two other elements of release of lots of information, namely, Bob Gates as Director, and then his successors, saying, "We're now in a period of openness and we are going to release a lot more information. We're going to declassify a lot more information." Gates, I think, named half a dozen or more specific past covert actions that he said would be released, and we're in the process right now of releasing all of the materials on the Bay of Pigs and on Guatemala.

In the meantime, along came Oliver Stone's movie on the Kennedy assassination ["JFK," 1991]. We now have quite a number of retired former senior officers going through 17 archival boxes of Oswald documents, 73 boxes of microfilm records, 16 or 19 boxes of House Assassination Committee notes, all of which contain classified information, some still of a particularly sensitive nature. When the House staffers came over to ask questions about what the Agency knew, they threw a fishing net out and they would ask about a single name and then want to see the entire file. So what they learned were the true names of agents, the true names of Agency employees working under cover overseas, and the true nature of liaison relationships with a number of countries. All of that they wrote in penciled notes, but one of the traditions in the organization was that you never put the true name and the pseudonym on the same piece of paper. But they did. All those files, however, were sequestered. They have been protected all these years until now.

Now we're in the process of taking every single document, reading every line of it, and deciding whether this is still sensitive today and or whether it isn't. We did turn over about 250,000 or 300,000 pages to the National Archives back in August

1993, but those were heavily redacted, heavily excised. Ever since then, there has been increasing pressure to release more and more and more of that stuff.

The President did appoint a panel of eminent historians who come down to Washington every month, and they review the documents we have just sent over and they say, "We don't buy this. Make a case for protecting this individual." So we do an awful lot of that backing and forthing until we have learned better how to deal with that kind of a situation, and they have come to a little better appreciation of why something is still sensitive 30 years later, if it is.

That's something I've been doing for the last five years, three days a week: seeing my own name on things that I didn't release 30 years before that I'm in the process of releasing today. It is a significant challenge.

**Oettinger:** Can we jump back chronologically to your stint as inspector general? You didn't retire right after that?

**Briggs:** No.

**Oettinger:** Take us further forward. I'm anxious for the class to get the benefit of your inside stand.

**Student:** Bill Colby had been executive director and then became DCI. When he was executive director, one of his principal support elements was the comptroller. We automated the comptroller function, the budgetary function, long before much of the government did. Colby, when he had been out in Saigon, was used to working with computer printouts. He wasn't frightened by them the way most of the Agency leaders were.

When he learned what he could get from the comptroller automatically, he could see how things were being allocated, how successful the results of the allocations were, and he, therefore, felt that the position he had occupied as executive director was superfluous. So he abolished the position of executive director. There was a little flack from Congress on that because up to that point people like Dick Helms, who were focused on operations, or McCone, who was focused on technical collection, turned to the then-executive director, a fellow named Colonel Red [Lawrence] White, and before him, Lyman Kirkpatrick, who subsequently went up to Brown University, and let them run the Agency on a day-to-day basis, handle all the administrative details, worry about promotions and budgets and things of that sort. But Colby, as DCI, learned how to do that and said, "I don't need that function anymore." So he abolished it.

Later on, when Carter came in, Stan Turner was the Director, and Frank Carlucci was his deputy. Carlucci had run the Bureau of the Budget. He also had other senior-level government functions and he didn't think he needed an executive director. What we saw, however, was that Turner had to spend more and more of his time downtown, and Carlucci had to spend more and more time on the Hill. So the Agency's internal management was tending to fall apart and the four fiefdoms then were tending to get more and more actively engaged.

After they left and Bobby Inman came in as deputy director, he had the same feeling, because he had run a big agency like NSA and had been Director of Naval Intelligence. So he was opposed to the executive director position. By the time they left, it was apparent, with Casey, that there needed to be some internal management. John McMahon was the logical person to become executive director. Several of us got together in a cabal and said to the Director, " This has just got to happen. You have to have somebody handling day-to-day management." So the position of executive director was re-established and McMahon was moved into it.

McMahon was only there six months when Bobby Inman left. McMahon moved up to become deputy director. I then moved in to become executive director. The job of the executive director is in fact supposed to be day-to-day management of the Agency. However, what that meant, essentially, because McMahon didn't want to let go of a number of other things, was that I had to oversee the continually explosive information handling developments of the Agency.

**Oettinger:** For an English major you got involved pretty heavily in this technical structure.

**Briggs:** Yes, I did indeed, and my veneer went from thin to fat. It was a challenging job, but it was a frustrating job, too, because I don't think I really had the backing. I don't think that Casey really saw that as a terribly important job. Maybe he did, but not ...

**Oettinger:** What was Casey like to work with? In the few encounters that I had with him, the challenge was mostly overcoming the difficulty of understanding what he said because he mumbled.

**Briggs:** He did that deliberately. I've heard him speak beautifully, articulately.

**Oettinger:** Oh, oh! That was an act!

**Briggs:** That was an act, in large part.

It was a fascinating job. Here was a 72-year-old, multimillionaire Irishman, who was also a cabinet officer. As a cabinet officer, he's expected to participate in policy formulation. As the Director of Central Intelligence, he's not supposed to be involved in policy formulation. He was a man who, if he saw a gap, wanted it filled, and if somebody didn't fill it, like the Secretary of State, he would fill it.

He was a delightful guy personally. But it was a challenge working for him and, of course, part of the problem was that he really didn't see the necessity for being terribly kind to the Congress. Bobby Inman had done that for him. As long as Bobby was there, it was beautiful, because Bobby Inman got along very well with Congress.

**Oettinger:** He cultivated that throughout the time he was director of NSA.

**Briggs:** Right. So, then, as I said to a couple of you at lunch, I was sitting in a conference room one day, and a security guy came in and said, "Casey wants to see you." I walked into his room and, to repeat myself, Casey and McMahon are sitting in their chairs, looking up at me, and an electric shock ran down my spine. And Casey said, "We've got to do something about the Congress."

So my final job in the Agency was director of congressional affairs. At the time I started, Barry Goldwater was chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI), and Eddie Boland was chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the House side. Of course, the big issue was the support to the Contras, and that was a constant battle. Some day, I hope that whole story will come out. There's all the flapdoodle about Ollie North and the White House and who knew what and encouraging businessmen to contribute to activities illegally and all that kind of good stuff.

There's no question in my mind that a lot of people knew what Ollie was doing, including White House staff, and including congressional staff. One of the saddest things, I think, is that what keeps coming up is the mining of the harbor. With Goldwater in the chair of the SSCI, that was a Republican organization, generally supportive of the Contra support—not Iran-Contra.

**Student:** We're now in Nicaragua.

**Briggs:** Yes. The opposition came from the House, from Eddie Boland and his crew. So we made it a point in the Agency to make sure that Eddie Boland knew everything that we were doing in Nicaragua in support of the Contras. After the mining incident, Eddie Boland said, publicly, "I don't know what all the fuss is about. We knew all about it."

We also had briefed the SSCI, the Senate Select Committee, but because they had been supportive, we didn't make the same effort to make sure that they were aware of everything. It was only one item that was included in the briefing. It was missed, obviously, by Senator Moynihan, as well as by Senator Goldwater at the time. When all the fuss started, Goldwater got very upset and wrote an open letter to Casey, which was published in the newspapers, saying he was really, excuse me, pissed off. Casey then went back with McMahon to see

Goldwater, and showed him the text of the presentation, and Goldwater said, "I owe the Agency an apology." The end result of that was that the leadership in the Senate said, "The Senate of the United States does not apologize."

So that story is still being told as if it really wasn't known, and we really did pull the rug out from under Goldwater and all the rest of them. I think John McMahon mentioned that in the testimony that he gave on Iran-Contra. I think it's in one of those multiple volumes, but I'm not 100 percent sure of that.

We tried, in the Office of Congressional Affairs, to find a compromise with the Congress on how covert action is reported to the Congress. The big pressure that had been on from the beginning was for Congress to be informed at the same time that the executive branch decides to go with a particular covert action. There's been resistance to that, I think for understandable reasons. But you could conclude—and it's what I personally would rather see happen (all of my remarks are personal; I'm not speaking for the Agency on any of this)—that there should be a recognition of the role of the Congress to the extent that on those things that are the most sensitive, the chairman and the vice chairman of the oversight committees be informed. It's my experience that, in fact, there was less leakage from the Congress than there was from the executive branch on some of these items, particularly those things that are political hot potatoes.

**Oettinger:** Well, in that case, why restrict it to the chairman and vice chairman?

**Briggs:** Because it isn't true that there was *no* leakage.

**Oettinger:** So you were being prudent.

**Briggs:** Yes. The more members of Congress who serve on the intelligence committees, I think, the better it is, even though in some cases you're going to have some mavericks who pose problems.

As a retiree, I have been chairman of the board of what's called AFIO, the Association of Former Intelligence Officers. The reason AFIO exists is to try counterbalance some of the erroneous information that is put out by the media. So we have contact with 120 or 150 academicians who have courses in intelligence, and we help them by giving them lecturers for their classes, by recommending texts for them to use, and by making available a newsletter that AFIO publishes. We apparently haven't done a very good job, because I still find that the media and a good bit of the public thinks that the Agency is corrupt and is responsible for everything, as I said, except the San Francisco earthquake. That is frustrating.

Somebody must have some questions about the Kennedy assassination.

**Student:** Before you tell us about the Kennedy assassination, if you're ready for that at this point, a number of your stories have illustrated what is I think both an interesting problem for us and, to a certain extent, the focus of our course of study, and that is the challenges around command and control. We often look at command and control as sort of a technical function of various sorts. But I'm thinking of it, in this case, as regards the illustrations you've described, as the political function. That is, your agency, particularly, has leadership that comes from the democratic process through an elected official, so in a certain sense, at least, it is a politicized leadership. Yet we have the paradox that you're charged to be, in a sense, an objective information gathering and reporting agency without that sort of political taint. Yet, obviously, your agency is made up of human beings who are American citizens and have both the right and the responsibility to have political opinions. So I would think there'd be a variety of complexities emerging in this environment about the idea of trying to strive toward the objective in intelligence reporting and analysis, and yet, there must be political feelings and various sorts of dynamics along this line.

**Briggs:** It is very interesting that back in the days when Allen Dulles was the Director of Central Intelligence, and his brother

was Secretary of State, and Eisenhower was the President, we had a marvelous relationship. Of course we were good guys in those days. So that made it easier. A number of us had thought it desirable to have the DCI as a member of the cabinet, but as time went by I think most of us have concluded that that is not a good idea.

**Student:** What's the current status?

**Briggs:** Of course, Deutch had the status of a cabinet officer.

**Oettinger:** Did he ever attend the cabinet meetings?

**Briggs:** I don't know whether he ever attended. I don't remember hearing of it.

**Oettinger:** He was nominally a member of the cabinet, but I don't think the cabinet ever convened with him, or I don't think that he was ever invited there. It's a strange situation. Now, of course, we're in limbo.

**Briggs:** Those of you who saw Bob Gates's confirmation hearing on television saw that politicization was a major issue, and there were a number of former analysts who didn't find him terribly lovable and said some very direct things about him and about that factor. Bob has said, and I think said correctly, that if he had attempted to politicize, his analysts would rise up in revolution. The analysts in the DDI feel very, very strongly that their job is to be objective. Now, sometimes they get frustrated because some text will get changed as it moves up the ladder, and it has occurred that occasionally an individual DCI will attempt to bring some pressure on to influence a report. As a matter of fact, as IG, I had to go to one of the DCIs and tell him that the troops thought this was the case. He was quite surprised to hear it, and it had not been intended.

Sure, it's a definite potential problem. But as I said a few moments ago, a little bit emotionally, if the Agency cannot produce an objective, disinterested, factually based analysis, then I don't see the logic of continuing it.

**Oettinger:** Expand on that a little bit, because one other element, which may or may not be in conflict with what you just said, is that intelligence is worthless if it doesn't reach a customer and get absorbed. So, in some sense, there has to be a close relationship between somebody or -bodies that represent intelligence and the customer. In your eyes, is that an aspect of politicization, or is that an aspect of delivering unpoliticized information? How do you come to grips with that?

**Briggs:** Here again, I think you get back down to personalities. What's the personality of the President? What's his view of the organization and the use to be made of intelligence, and who's the DCI? If they're simpatico, then the probability is that the information will get to him. Whether he'll use it or not is something else.

Of course, this will always be the case. I don't remember whether Gates said this or whether Chris Andrew, in his book *For the President's Eyes Only*,[13] said it, but most Presidents have high expectations, and their staffs have even higher expectations, of what intelligence can do. An estimate, after all, is an estimate, and it's bound to be wrong sometimes. Most Presidents feel that they want intelligence to tell them when a riot is going to occur or what the intentions of another country or government are. You can't always do that.

I think it was Christopher Andrew who said that only four Presidents since George Washington have really had a flair for the use of intelligence, and they just included Washington himself, Eisenhower, Bush, and who the heck was the fourth? I forget. But it's certainly true that intelligence, if it isn't used, is useless.

**Oettinger:** Which reminds me, I meant to say a word earlier. This is a good time to inject that one of your colleagues in last year's seminar, David Radi, was on the staff of the White House Situation Room, and his term paper in this course proved

[13] Christopher M. Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995.

good enough for us to publish as an incidental paper.[14]

**Student:** I was fascinated by your discussion or examples of the early processes of gathering and storing information. But the problem now seems insurmountable with the open source, fast, information highway type material that's available. How is the CIA handling that today? It seems to me that they could easily hire an army to manage their information.

**Briggs:** Of course, all the staff have their own terminals, and they now have access not only to the classified files, but also to all the commercially available files in the outside world. We even have our own Web site now. I think it's going to be the same kind of problem. We're going to reassess a lot of this technological world today and tomorrow as we did back in the 1960s. Now, whether that means we'll have increased capacity to retrieve the relevant from the mass, I don't know.

**Oettinger:** But there is an inherent problem, which, again, is one of the things that accounts for the recurrence of criticism. If you knew in advance what was significant, if you had a crystal ball, then search and retrieval would be easy. You could have an automaton do it. But the fact that you don't know what you're looking for until you've seen it means that you have a problem of selectivity and, therefore, an inherent error. I guess you put it a moment ago that most Presidents, or for that matter, most other consumers of intelligence, either have a genuine expectation of more than can be delivered, or they know better but the expectation is convenient ass-covering for them because it enables them, if things go sour, to say, "We've had an intelligence failure," as opposed to, "Kismet" or, "I screwed up." It's just easier to say, "I got bum intelligence." That's a cynical view of the customer's use of intelligence, but it's a little bit like public expectations about health and safety. If somebody has committed a crime by permitting tainted strawberries to get shipped all over the United States (you all saw the headlines this morning), that's a crime. Now, if there was an accident and the temperature didn't get high enough during sterilization, that's tough luck.

Dick Neustadt, who used to be at the Kennedy School, and who is now emeritus, wrote some marvelous studies of the swine flu vaccine problem in the Ford Administration days, where a bit of panic about influenza led to the well-intentioned release of vaccine whose effect was to make more people sick than would have been under a flu epidemic.[15]

Now, you cannot have 100 percent assurance of every prediction. Let me try this out on you, Chuck: though an intelligence agency, or any supplier of information, claims objectivity and so on, there is also some pressure to claim more than perhaps one can deliver, because if you look more infallible, you're going to get more money and be able to do better. So there's some pressure on both the supplier and the consumer to put more weight on it than can be put there.

**Briggs:** Sure, and anyone's objectivity is a semantic issue, as we all know it is.

**Oettinger:** So there are some inherent limits on crystal balling, but I find it fascinating how some of these fundamental questions persist.

**Briggs:** Do any of you have any nagging concerns based on what you know of the intelligence function from the media? For instance, is covert action really controlled, or is the Agency able just to go off like a rogue elephant and do what it wants to do?

---

[14] David A. Radi, "Intelligence Inside the White House: The Influences of Executive Style and Technology on Information Consumption." Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Incidental Paper, March 1997.

[15] Richard E. Neustadt, *The Swine Flu Affair*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978 (available from the U.S. Government Printing Office); *The Epidemic That Never Was*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Or about the Kennedy files? Or about any of these things? I'm interested to see what your apprehensions might be.

**Student:** When did you see a larger oversight into covert action? Because, as you were saying before, it seems that the budget was kind of a rubber stamp thing, and I'm not sure how closely the role of covert action was looked into outside of the Agency itself. When did you see that this had changed greatly?

**Briggs:** I think it changed quite some time ago, but what I would suggest to you is that there are three different categories of covert action. There's political propaganda-type activity, and on the far end there's paramilitary activity, and paramilitary activity is the most contentious, the most problematic. It should only be undertaken if you can't resolve your problems diplomatically or militarily—overtly militarily. It should, on reflection, be supportable. I agree with Stansfield Turner on that point. But I also would suggest that it ought to be a catalytic activity as far as CIA is concerned. I think I mentioned this to you at lunch.

The Agency might uniquely have a capacity to do something, at least to begin it, but if it's going to continue, and if it's going to be paramilitary, then I think the Agency ought to pull out, having provided the catalytic function, and have someone else (and in the paramilitary case, I would assume that it would be a military organization) carry it on overtly. But while it is still necessary for it to be clandestine, if the President decides that it is important enough to put his name to a finding that goes to the Congress for their discussion, then I can see the Agency continuing to play a role in it.

I don't know whether it will always be true that the Agency will have the unique capability it had earlier on of being able to do something within a 24-hour period, not being constrained by the DOD, or State Department, or other headquarters regulations, or will have equipment of a nature that is usable in an instantaneous context. When you had a group like the Air America crowd, that's cowboy stuff. It's fantastic stuff! Whether we'll ever be able to do it again or need to do it again, I don't know.

**Student:** I'm not sure if you can tell me this, but to what extent does the Agency still maintain paramilitary operational capability?

**Briggs:** I can't, really. I can't, and besides I've been out for 11 years and so I don't know what the current status is.

**Oettinger:** In a sense, it almost doesn't matter where the capability resides—whether it's a contractor or it gets done by military detail and so on. I think that putting it in terms of the organization of the intelligence agencies is missing the larger issue, and perhaps you guys or Chuck will disagree. It has to do with the relationship between the executive and the legislature. This is not really a petty matter of organizational structure. I think it's a matter of higher politics, of the exercise of power, and, again, of a fundamental tension within the U.S. Constitution between wanting a chief executive who can react firmly against external threats, and a chief executive who's accountable to the legislature and who adheres to the principle that fielding armies, declaring war, and all of those awful things are not to be done lightly by a sovereign, but rather by the delegates of the people.

So you have these two different worlds. There's the War Powers Act, which puts some severe limitations on the President in deploying military force, and would lean him toward the more convenient notion of a presidential finding if he uses the covert action, paramilitary thing. On the other hand, if that gets unearthed, no matter how well intentioned it was, and especially if it fails, it then becomes sleazeball, abuse of power, et cetera, whereas there's something clean, surgical, and patriotic about using military force when the situation is right and there is political backing for it. So I think that the question of who has the means, where it resides, and so on is secondary to the fact that you're dealing with a fundamental contest between the executive and the legislative over the control of force.

**Briggs:** Yes. I would agree with that. It's interesting that Jimmy Carter, who came in on a very high moral tone, who was beating up on the Agency badly, after he had been in office for a while discovered the utility of the covert action tool and started a number of things. Among other things, he was highly disenchanted, I guess, that the Soviets had lied to him in one case. Afghanistan was seen as a good thing to do in paramilitary terms, where the Contra thing was a bad thing to do in paramilitary terms.

**Student:** I have two questions. Did you ever meet your counterparts in the Soviet intelligence community? And what do you think was the role of your agency in winning the Cold War?

**Briggs:** I don't think there's any question but that the intelligence community as a whole, not just the Agency alone, made a significant contribution to the end of the Cold War.

**Student:** Was it a decisive one?

**Briggs:** Semantics? I don't quite know how to answer that. I watched this program last night on the Discovery Channel, and the theme was that even in the event that you have a successful covert action, if that's what you consider Afghanistan to have been, the "blowback," as they called it, is far more costly, either in financial terms or moral terms or what have you. Here are all these guys who were trained to throw the Soviet army out of Afghanistan and now they're the ones playing shoot-'em-up among themselves. The people trained in Guatemala or wherever are some of the terrorists of today. The same is true of the Middle East. So, what they're saying is that if you're going to do a covert action, think about what some of the longer-range context might be. Well, the operator's answer to that is: "My God, if I do all that kind of agonizing, I'm never going to move."

**Oettinger:** I would respond to your question slightly differently, because the covert action is only a piece of it. I suppose I would opt on "decisive" on the following grounds, and again it would be interesting to see what Chuck's reaction would be. I would say that it is, in fact, the intelligence activities of both the Soviet Union and the United States that provided 40 years of peace after the end of World War II and permitted a quiet economic and political disintegration of the Soviet Union without a shot being fired. Why? Because, essentially, the Open Skies policy that Eisenhower declared when Gary Powers got shot down, and he had essentially no choice, became the norm and created, willy-nilly, a certain measure of trust between the Soviet Union and the United States, largely because it was, at least for a significant period, damned hard to lie about installations on one side or the other. It seems to me that intelligence on both sides helped create a situation where no nuclear shot got fired in anger, and that to me is significant as hell.

**Briggs:** Indeed. As a matter of fact I think that probably Jim Woolsey and Judge Webster at least, maybe Gates, made that point when the question came up: "Now that the Soviet Union threat is gone, not *whither* CIA, but *whether* CIA? Why do you need it?" One of the responses was, "Because we don't know where all those serpents are. We don't know quite how to deal with such a diffuse threat as international crime, international drugs, et cetera, whereas we knew what the strength of the Soviet Union was. They knew what ours was, and the probability was that they weren't going to launch first anymore than we were going to launch first."

**Oettinger:** We're far enough along in the course now that at a certain level of abstraction this may not seem as dumb as it might without more concrete evidence of the kind we've been hearing in the past few sessions and today. Chuck gave us the notion that gathering intelligence is unlawful. The other guy's agents are committing a crime on your territory. Now, if that's the case, and it is, why is it so widely tolerated? Why does everybody do it? I think one of the reasons, quite independent of the

U.S.-Soviet Cold War confrontation, is that there's probably at least a tacit understanding that it is better to know what the other guy is about than not to know, because if you do not know, the odds of an unmeasured, preemptive reaction are so much greater. So everybody tolerates everybody else's spies not because it's desirable, but because it is better than the alternative.

**Briggs:** And if you have a Khadafy, or a Saddam Hussein, or an emerging country that develops a nuclear or bacteriological or chemical warfare capability without the practical-over-historical background, how do you deal with that? How do you anticipate it in the first place? How do you prevent it, more likely, in the second place?

**Oettinger:** Then the only alternative, slightly after the fact if you're still around, is to nuke 'em or retaliate in kind and so forth and so on. Again, it gets you back to: Why covert action? If you were to discover that Khadafy or Saddam Hussein is about to launch a nuke or to loose anthrax someplace and so on, would not a covert action, paramilitary under the Defense Department or under a finding or whatever, be preferable to nuking? Because then you're setting off a chain reaction. Ultimately, these are not petty organizational questions. They get back to the very fundamental survival of a state or maintenance of collective peace.

**Briggs:** I'd be very interested to see what comes out in the next year or so, after the past year's multiple efforts at coming up with a design for the intelligence community in this new world. Nothing, really, has resulted from that except for this reconnaissance and mapping agency (the National Imaging and Mapping Agency). But one of the things you could say is that in an open society, with this explosively torrential flood of literature that's coming at us now with the Internet and with television, with CNN able to get information before anybody else can, and all the rest of that, why not decide that, in fact, the guy who should be up front on the foreign affairs field is the Secretary of State? CIA, the military, and the overseas world should be subservient.

**Oettinger:** That's an interesting thought.

**Student:** I would tend to disagree because of the same argument that we were just having about the Saddam Husseins of the world. My fear isn't the state-to-state intelligence exchange confrontation, but the nonstate actors that are now out there, and can release that anthrax or, if you believe in information warfare, blow up our banking system or whatever. That's the role that I see the CIA playing.

**Briggs:** I didn't mean to imply that CIA would disappear. I just meant to imply that the State Department ought to play a more aggressively up-front managerial role, if you will, in the area of foreign affairs. What that means, of course, is that you've got to have a Secretary of State who gets along with the President.

I would also suggest to you that maybe the National Security Advisor position should either be abolished or reduced. I don't know if you ever knew Jimmy Lay, but back in the days when the National Security Council was first established, Jimmy Lay was the executive secretary. He understood the whole community, and he had the capacity for pulling people and things together. And he didn't compete with the Secretary of State.

**Oettinger:** Again, I think you've touched there on an important sort of basic principle. You guys will find some traces of it in the testimony of Richard Beal and John Grimes in the seminar proceedings,[16] and in the previously cited piece by David

[16] Richard S. Beal, "Decision Making, Crisis Management, Information and Technology," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, Guest Presentations, Spring 1984*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, February 1985; John Grimes, "Information Technologies and Multinational Corporations," in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, Guest Presentations, Spring 1986*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, February 1987.

Radi,[17] on how the customer can make use of whatever the intelligence body finds out. What Chuck was just saying was that, at least in one regime, there was a National Security Advisor who performed this role of pulling the various threads together. Presumably, if he was useful, the President listened to him, so that it was, in fact, a worthwhile activity. Chuck also said some key words: the agencies trusted him, so, presumably, they gave him the time of day. You'll find in some of the seminar accounts the situation where that kind of function inside the White House didn't work for either or both of two reasons: the President didn't pay attention to the guy, or the intelligence agencies distrusted him and didn't give him the time of day. As a consequence, it became necessary essentially to duplicate some of the intelligence functions within the White House, which then created rivalries between those guys and the intelligence agencies.

**Briggs:** One of the most dangerous things, historically, that I think we've observed is that if the policy maker in fact has direct access to the raw traffic, there is a great possibility of his taking an action that is too hasty. This is where Beal and we got into arguments sometimes, because the system he was building up would provide direct raw information to the White House, making it unnecessary for DIA or CIA or NSA or anybody else.

**Oettinger:** Which, in a sense, was the point. But it's like the question about overload of information. That's why there's a perpetual tension there. Somebody's got to digest the stuff, and if the President does not have a good relationship with the Director of Central Intelligence, then he's going to try to get his own person and you set up these rivalries. The other irony out of that, of course, is that the systems which Beal and so on built were the systems that then caught Ollie North.

**Briggs:** Another side of that is (not with regard to Dick Beal himself, but others) people wandering in and out of that building when classified information was everywhere. That gave us a little heartburn.

**Oettinger:** These are recurrent dilemmas. That's the reason for my fanaticism about this matter of balances and so on, because the problems don't get solved.

**Briggs:** But anybody with nine kids is either a perpetual optimist or an idiot.

**Oettinger:** Or just having fun.

**Briggs:** I prefer to be thought of as the former.

**Oettinger:** We thank you very much. Don't go just yet. I have a small token of our large appreciation for you.

**Briggs:** Well, my pleasure.

[17] See note 14.

INCSEMINARS1997

ISBN-1-879716-47-X