**Fixing Intel II**

***Intelligence should produce decision-support – generally unclassified – for all.***

Robert David Steele

For just under thirty years I have been striving to re-direct the craft of intelligence away from spies and secrecy promoting war and waste, toward open sources and decision-support – generally unclassified – useful not only to the President, but to all who need decision-support. Until Donald Trump and Mike Flynn came along, and John Brennan over-played his hand with lies of a very grand scale, I have been successfully marginalized. It is nice to be heard again.

In 2010 Mike Flynn, today National Security Advisor to Donald Trump, published [*Fixing Intel I*](https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf) with Matt Pottinger and Paul Batchelor. That report rocked the US Intelligence Community (US IC) and because Mike Flynn was too respected to be ignored, forced the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), Jim Clapper, to go through the motions of listening, first by hosting Mike Flynn in the Office of the DNI, and then by giving him the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

In 2014 Mike Flynn reached out to me and I wrote [*On Defense Intelligence: Seven Strikes*](http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/07/02/on-defense-intelligence-seven-strikes/), delivered to Chuck Hagel at home, in an effort to save his job. Flynn’s honesty clashed with the dishonesty of the White House, the “leaders” in the Department of Defense, and the US IC. Among the 65 or so flag officers I have dealt with over the years, Mike Flynn is second only to Peter Schoomaker in understanding that Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) is 80-95% of the solution for creating strategic, policy, operations, and acquisition intelligence. I am delighted, not only that Mike Flynn has ended up in the White House, but that John Brennan has over-played his hand with lies on a very grand scale, to the point that Donald Trump has every reason to embrace those of us who have been critical of the secret intelligence world for decades.

When Joe Biden says that the US IC is the “crown jewel” of US national security, he is at best badly mis-informed, and at worst actively deceiving the public. Perhaps he has been compromised, as have been so many other US politicians upon whom the National Security Agency (NSA) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have been spying on for decades, with impunity.

*The US IC is more like flakes of gold dust buried in a very large cow pie.*

Today Mike Flynn is too busy to focus on intelligence, and Donald Trump appears to have a weak intelligence transition team. They may not understand the flaws of the US IC with the depth and breadth of knowledge that could be brought to bear by William Binney, Ray McGovern, and a handful of others.

With a lifetime of writing on this topic easily accessible [free online](http://robertdavidsteele.com), I will focus here on just four aspects that are being neglected by Donald Trump’s well-intentioned but somewhat challenged intelligence transition team: philosophy, holistic analytics, true cost economics, and the fundamentals of manning & funding for effect.

**Philosophy**

The purpose of intelligence is to provide a mix of encyclopedic information and warning including atmospherics, and decision-support — explicit answers to specific questions from the commander and their senior staff.  Intelligence is a form of adult education on the fly, mission-centric decision-support, and acquisition-centric research.

Hence, the vast majority of what we do today — technical collection that is not processed, generic “intelligence” reports that do not address specific questions from specific customers — is not intelligence, merely classified information.

Worse, we are failing to provide intelligence with integrity relevant to grand strategy tailored to defeat all threats, harmonize all policies, guide acquisition and reduce all costs, and produce a safe and prosperous nation “with liberty and justice for all.” Intelligence should be but is not at this time “root.”

The balance of my Philosophy of Intelligence, with graphical illustrations, is [free online](http://phibetaiota.net/2016/09/reflections-philosophy-of-intelligence/).

**Holistic Analytics**

My life was altered by LtGen Dr. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret), when I read the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change as published in 2004 under the title of [*A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*](http://phibetaiota.net/2008/05/a-more-secure-world-our-shared-responsibility-report-of-the-secretary-generals-high-level-panel-on-threats-challenges-and-change-a-more-secure-world-our-shared-responsibility-report-of-the-s/). For the first time in history the member states of the United Nations agreed on the ten specific high-level threats to humanity, in priority order. I list them here, together with twelve core policies drawn from a number of presidential transition team “mandate for change” publication, to highlight the failure of the US IC to be relevant to eight of the ten threats and all but one of the core policies – it merits explicit observation that [OSINT can provide 75-99% of all of the intelligence that we need](http://phibetaiota.net/2012/09/graphic-top-ten-threats-to-humanity-relevance-of-open-sources-methods/).

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| --- | --- |
| **High-Level Threats**01 Poverty02 Infectious Disease03 Environmental Degradation04 Inter-State Conflict05 Civil War06 Genocide07 Other Atrocities 08 Proliferation09 Terrorism 10 Transnational Crime | **Core Policy Domains**01 Agriculture02 Diplomacy03 Economy04 Education05 Energy06 Family07 Health08 Immigration09 Justice10 Security11 Society12 Water |

**Figure 1: Holistic Analytic Model for Presidential Intelligence (Decision-Support)**

As best I can tell, the transition team is still stuck in the Cold War model that allows the US IC to pretend to be serious about Inter-State Conflict and Terrorism, while ignoring everything else. The US IC is completely unable to address policies other than security, and is explicitly not able, as Ellen Seidman of the National Economic Council lectured us in the 1990’s, able to provide “compare and contrast” decision support between US and foreign capabilities and competitiveness across the varied policy domains.

Roughly 80% of the above could be done at very low cost ($2-3 billion a year) with an [Open Source Agency](http://phibetaiota.net/2017/01/robert-steele-memorandum-for-the-president-elect-on-need-for-an-open-source-agency/), something [Mike Flynn was briefed](http://phibetaiota.net/?s=Memorandum+Flynn) on in 2014. I pray he does not forget what he was told – throwing money at data mining done by Johns Hopkins, to take one example, simply will not do. It would also set the gold standard for intelligence as decision-support, and give the incoming DNI what I told Jim Clapper he needed in 2007: a basis for focusing secret sources and methods very narrowly on that which is a) not available openly and b) vital to national interests. I speculate that roughly 70% of what the secret world does today is waste – useless.

*General Tony Zinni, USMC (Ret): “*[*I got, at best, 4% of what I needed from the US IC*](http://phibetaiota.net/?s=Tony+Zinni+4%25)*.”*

**True Cost Economics**

Iran and Donald Trump have one really big thing in common: they both “get” that we are paying list price while everyone else is paying half-price. Iran very pointedly reached out to Donald Trump when it announced that it was paying half the announced price for both its Boeing and its Airbus. Donald Trump has very pointedly called Boeing, Lockheed, and others out for massive price gouging and engineering dysfunctionality.

*Government specifications cost-plus contracting has destroyed the US economy.*

Engineers are in the ideal, hackers – like astronauts full of the right stuff – who do more with less (Buckminster Fuller called this Synergetics). Properly trained and led engineers understand the complete life-cycle cost – in financial, social, ecological, and time & space terms – of every piece of gear they touch.

Leaders who understand true cost economics understand that there are four levels of analysis – strategic, policy, operations, and technical – and that it makes no sense at all, to take two examples now prominent in our defense posture, to a) have 1,000 bases all over the world such that our Army is not ours, it belongs to the countries where it has been loaned; and b) to have a one million soldier Army with three to six million contractors (instead of a three-million soldier Army, home-based, with no contractors.

True cost economics at a granular level show the actual cost in scarce clean water used up or contaminated (for example, by fracking); the energy used; the emissions and toxins produced; and in the case of many of the products sold in the USA, the child labor, tax avoidance, and regulatory comprise contained therein.

*No one on the Trump transition team or in the US IC has a clue on this point.*

**Manning & Funding for Effect**

My first article critical of the US IC was ghost-written for General Al Gray, then Commandant of the Marine Corps. His embrace of my views, published as “[Global Intelligence Challenges of the 1990’s](http://phibetaiota.net/1989/07/general-al-gray-on-global-intelligence-challenges-1989/),” meant a lot to me. This was the first publication to specify both the need to allocate resources against emerging threats and non-state actors, and the need to use intelligence to justify “peaceful preventive measures.” For thirty years everyone has lived by Henry Kissinger’s maxim,

*Intelligence is not all that important in the exercise of power,*

*and is often, in point of fact, useless.*

What Kissinger really means is that in a cost-plus funding environment with unlimited borrowing, no balanced budget, and no accountability to the public, government is a “pay to play” endeavor, and policies are compelled via blackmail or bribery.

The time has come to restructure the US IC so as to provide decision-support to Whole of Government – every Cabinet department and agency at every level, and the Congressional jurisdictions overseeing them. Most of this intelligence (decision-support) can and should be unclassified – rooted in open source and thus shareable with the public, media, and allies.

Here are the seven areas where I believe that deeper thought is needed by the Trump transition team, where Dan Coates can and should be aggressive (I draw on my longer post with graphics, [Fixing Intelligence II: Seven Precepts](http://phibetaiota.net/2016/12/fixing-intel-ii-seven-precepts-a-latino-view/)).

**01 Open Source Agency (OSA).** Based in the former Press Corps Offices in the White House, this tiny organization will be agile and harness the distributed intelligence of all minds world-wide. It will create a Presidential Dashboard and with the same data, be able to create Governor, Cabinet, and Congressional District Dashboards. It will support Trump Channel fireside chats and educational briefings to the public as well as interactive polling of the public. The CIA’s well-intentioned but shallow Open Source Enterprise (OSE) will be absorbed by the OSA.

**02 Counterintelligence (CI).** Donald Trump is surrounded by traitors. My personal estimate is five hundred, spread across the government but centered in the national security community. However, both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) merit special attention. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) needs a house-cleaning – it has “protectors” of varied religious, ideological, and financial treason groups – but once cleansed, it should be unleashed.

**03 National Analysis Center (NAC).** The US IC analytic corps is a mix of callow youth without substantive foreign experience, and the burrowed in geriatric crowd also drawing retirement pay from the military without ever having demonstrated a world-class depth of knowledge about anything. We need a NAC where analysts are hired at mid-career after first establishing, using only open sources, that they are one of the top-cited authorities in their domain, and have already established linguistic competency and a network of multinational counterparts. On balance I favor the extraction of the Directorate of Intelligence (DI) from CIA, and its integration into DIA after both workforces are cut in half (or more) to make way for mid-career hires that actually being real-world knowledge in with them.

**04 National Processing Center (NPC).** The National Geospatial Agency (NGA) is easily 50% waste and it cannot provide the updated military combat charts needed in printed form for multinational operations. It has failed completely to track cultural feature changes (both built and destroyed bridges, roads, buildings, airfields) over the past decade. The NPC, taking over NSA processing facilities, would provide a real-time exascale processing capability with all data geo-located to within ten meters. Most of the NGA can be retired; the best of its map-mapping capabilities can be folded in to the US Geological Survey (USGC) as recommended by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).

**05 Signals and Imagery Intelligence into the CIA.** NSA has no legislative charter and can be closed by President Trump with an executive order. William Binney should be empowered as the manager responsible for carving out the 20% of NSA that is worthy, and migrating that into a Directorate of Signals Intelligence (DS) within an expanded CIA. Similarly the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) should be wound down, with 20% of that endeavor – and its commercial contracts – migrated into a Directorate of Imagery Intelligence (DM) within CIA.

**06 Human Intelligence & Covert Operations.** CIA’s Directorate of Operations (DO) is a sham. Ninety percent of what it claims as clandestinely acquired “intelligence” is nothing more than hand-outs from foreign liaison services (e.g. Israel, Jordan) or legal traveler debriefings right here in the USA. We need a completely fresh start that gives up the convenience of official cover and starts over the Non-Official Cover (NOC) officers recruited at mid-career because of their existing access and skills, and includes a vastly restored third country national program from Principal Agents, and well as a completely new set of regional multinational clandestine stations where we provide money and technology while indigenous allies provide the street smarts. Military needs have never been met by CIA, but the military is also incompetent at Human Intelligence (HUMINT) – [no one manages all fifteen slices of HUMINT, only four of which are classified](http://phibetaiota.net/2010/01/graphic-osint-and-full-spectrum-humint-updated/), properly. Overt HUMINT goes to the OSA; clandestine HUMINT needs a total makeover. The Covert Action Staff (CAS) and the drone assassination operations should be closed down. The paramilitary capabilities should be transferred to the Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG).

**07 Management.** Dan Coates must be given financial authority over every single intelligence agency less the OSA, FBI, and the military service intelligence centers; his authority should extend to both the Undersecretary of Intelligence whose position and office should be phased out, and DIA, which could become the NAC if the incoming Secretary of Defense is ready to think really big about making intelligence the engine for strategic, policy, operational, and acquisition innovation. Dan Coates must also receive absolute authority over personnel as well as security clearances. As a restored DCI, having shut down the DNI, NSA, NRO, and NGA, while creating leaner and totally modern capabilities in the way of a NAC, NPC, and expanded CIA, Dan Coates should be able to meet Presidential needs for secret intelligence at half the cost of what we spend today, with no contractors at all. Intelligence is an inherent responsibility of command and of governance. Contractors represent a loss of integrity as well as capacity that cannot be over-stated. The OSA and FBI will be separately responsive to the President, the first via the Director or Deputy Director for Management of OMB, the second through the Attorney General. Our objective is straight-forward: to eliminate waste inclusive of contractors, while providing the President, Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officials as well as military commanders and law enforcement commissioners, with decision-support across all threats, all policies, all demographics, all levels of analysis.

*The truth at any cost lowers all other costs.*

*Intelligence with integrity is worth fighting for.*

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*Robert David Steele is a former Clandestine Operations Officer (C/O) for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who served three back-to-back tours overseas (with five times the regional average in recruitments and production) and three Washington tours, with responsibilities ranging from anti-terrorism, counter-insurgency and counterintelligence to managing advanced information technology pilot projects and futures planning for signals and imagery intelligence satellites. He went on to create the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity and establish the modern discipline of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). He has published extensively on the need to redirect intelligence from spies and secrecy promoting war and waste, toward open sources and methods enabling peace and prosperity.*

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* [The Future: Recent “Core” Work by Robert Steele](http://phibetaiota.net/2015/11/creating-the-future-recent-core-work-by-robert-steele/)