

## Fixing Intelligence: For A More Secure America

By Lt. Gen. William E. Odom, US Army, Ret. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002. 230 pages.

**Reviewed by Hayden B. Peake**

When a spy is caught by the FBI, or a CIA covert action fails, or an important international event is not predicted, the mantras of “FBI incompetence,” “abolish the CIA,” “reorganize the Intelligence Community,” and “create an intelligence tsar,” emerge from the halls of Congress and in the press. Executive Branch commissions are formed to study the issue, and congressional investigations soon follow. The result? Sometimes a new organization is formed or an existing one modified. More often, only procedural adjustments are made, though that may be enough. But the surprises have continued, and a growing number of academics and former intelligence officers have joined the chorus for reform. With the Intelligence Community facing the threat of terrorism and experiencing a digital revolution, they suggest that more far-reaching change is necessary now than has previously occurred.

Former CIA officer Arthur Hulnick, in his book *Fixing the Spy Machine*, concludes that the fix required is more in the nature of a tune-up than a major overhaul.<sup>1</sup> Gregory Treverton, onetime deputy director of the National Intelligence Council, takes a more critical view in his book, *Reshaping National Intelligence for an Age of Information*.<sup>2</sup> He recommends substantial modifications that would separate the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) from day-to-day management of the clandestine services; revise the way analysts function; and make greater use of open sources. In *Fixing Intelligence*, Lt. Gen. William Odom, former director of the National Security Agency (NSA), writing after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, takes an even more radical position.

*Fixing Intelligence* is not bedside reading. In fact, those unfamiliar with Intelligence Community history might do well to read the final chapter first. Titled “Conclusions—What It All Means,” the chapter is more of a summary of thoughts presented earlier than a listing of logical consequences following from evidence discussed. As such, it provides an overview that, in conjunction with the proposed new-organization chart on page 125, succinctly clarifies what the book is about. The somewhat arcane supporting details and rationale can be found in the earlier chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur S. Hulnick, *Fixing the Spy Machine: Preparing American Intelligence for the Twenty-first Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 222 pages.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence for an Age of Information* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 266 pages.

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The basic assumption of the book is that fundamental structural reform of intelligence is needed, especially after the 11 September 2001 attacks. A second assumption is that the proposals made will serve to provoke discussion. The book will certainly accomplish the second expectation, but the arguments made for the first will not be as easily accepted by those tasked with doing the work.

Odom's position is spelled out in Chapters 2–8, wherein he develops his proposed “principles, concepts and doctrine” for the Intelligence Community. Chapter 2 (“Essential Dogma and Useful Buzzwords”) stresses that “the major problem confronting all discussion about reform . . . [is] the absence of a commonly understood and accepted doctrine—a single set of terms, rules, and practices—for intelligence organization, operations, and management.”<sup>3</sup> Without ever making clear why this should be so, he goes on to assert that, without these attributes, the “dysfunctional behavior” of the Intelligence Community will continue.<sup>4</sup> Odom attempts to provide a doctrine based on “the army’s basic pattern emerging from WW II” and commonalities “with news operations—the press and television.”<sup>5</sup> For the management of resources, he draws on general organizational theory and models from the business and nonprofit worlds. But, despite pages of commentary, there is no simple declarative statement of doctrine and concepts, while principles are mentioned for some topics but not for others. In fact, most of the chapter is devoted to proposed organizational changes, obscuring the doctrine. A healthy dose of bumper sticker simplicity is needed. Thus, even the astute reader may be left unpersuaded of the need for a doctrine or confused about the specifics of the one proposed. This is important because, in the succeeding chapters, Odom refers frequently to the “concepts and principles” developed earlier.

The most important reform mentioned in Chapter 2 concerns the duties of the DCI, which are amplified in later chapters dealing with resource management, military intelligence, SIGINT, IMINT, HUMINT and counterintelligence (CI). Odom makes a strong, though not necessarily compelling, case for separating the currently “double-hatted position” of Director of Central Intelligence and the so-called “director of the CIA.”<sup>6</sup> The new DCI would be responsible for the entire Intelligence Community. The Community itself would be reorganized functionally, with a new *national clandestine service* (which would include the military services’ HUMINT elements) and a new *national counterintelligence service* (which would combine the CI elements of the current FBI and the military services, with elements of the CIA’s Directorate of Science and Technology attached). What is now the CIA’s Directorate of Intelligence would go under the National Intelligence Council. NSA and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency would remain largely unchanged, although some executive responsibilities would be added. Gen. Odom acknowledges that this magnitude of change could create some tensions.

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<sup>3</sup> Odom, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Technically, there is no statutory position of Director of the CIA; the DCI has that responsibility but not the title.

With one possible exception, the problems that Odom intends to correct are operational. He is particularly hard on “the miserable record of US counterintelligence,” citing the numerous cases of KGB penetrations as evidence.<sup>7</sup> But he does not show how *restructuring* would fix the *operational* problems that were, for the most part, due to poor performance all around, not the organizational structure in the units involved. Put another way, many of the functions singled out as needing reform—HUMINT, analysis, collection planning, counterintelligence, and budget considerations, to name a few—are dependent on human beings. Odom states that looking for improvements as a function of “better management and leadership [is] unconvincing,” but no evidence in support of alternatives is forthcoming.<sup>8</sup> And while the need for training is underscored, the value of increased managerial authority coupled with good people unhampered by unnecessary bureaucratic details functioning under the current system is not mentioned. Consequently, it is clear that he rejects the time-tested working-level notion that *organizational changes do not fix operational problems*.

The possible exception is the new authority that Gen. Odom advocates for the DCI position. Give the DCI the authority he needs, Odom says. Vigorous implementation of this proposal combined with good management and leadership could help prevent the kinds of problems already mentioned—including the 9/11 terrorist attacks—without the monumental disruption of operations and lives that the other changes would cause. Of course, this assumes that, as a rule, with good people, the organization is not critical, an alternative not addressed in *Fixing Intelligence*.

Odom argues that his changes are necessary because of the new world situation and the advances of technology—businesses and nonprofit organizations have restructured and the Intelligence Community must do so too. If this were true, one might well ask why Congress has not restructured itself in the last 200-plus years. It has, of course, adapted to technology, hired better people, formed new committees, and revised committee names when necessary. But its basic organization remains the same. Perhaps Arthur Hulnick is correct: fine-tuning, real authority, and better performance are all that is necessary.

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<sup>7</sup> Odom, 167.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

