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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/CODEWORD March 18, 1970
(Only red Tab A codeword)

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: A. W. Marshall

SUBJECT: Transmittal of memorandum on President's reading package

Attached (Tab A) you will find a report evaluating the process of producing the President's morning intelligence reading package. It contains an assessment of the current product (giving it good marks) and surfaces some problems and possible improvements. I think we ought to discuss these. I have tried not to bother you so far, but some of the problems and improvements may look different from where you sit. My view, so far, has been how the process looks from several levels below up to just below you.

Problems discussed are:

1. The current anomalous position of the CIA PDB.

2. The general weakness of feedback and guidance in the process for those providing inputs and preparing portions of the package, both at CIA and in the NSC staff.

Improvements suggested for consideration are:

1. Changes in the format of the Situation Room product and perhaps the total package in order to reduce the President's reading load. Some changes might be part of a solution to the CIA PDB problem through its closer integration with the Situation Room product.

2. Measures to improve feedback and guidance, especially to the NSC staff.

3. Provision of a limited number of secure, green telephones for the NSC staff to improve their interaction with analysts in the intelligence community and State and Defense Departments.

4. A tentative proposal is surfaced for a radical change in the way intelligence and other information materials are presented to you, and perhaps could be presented to the President at a later date. It is a flexible on-line reading program, available on a TV screen at all times, with controls allowing the reader to pick subjects he wants to read at several levels of detail. Such a system could give you and/or the President more control over what you read and increase feedback to the organizations supplying inputs to the program. Your reactions are required.

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MEMORANDUM

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~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/CODEWORD
(Only red Tab A codeword)

March 18, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: A. W. Marshall

SUBJECT: Evaluation of the Process Leading to the President's Morning Intelligence Reading Package

The purpose of this memorandum is (1) to present a general assessment of the process that leads to the President's morning intelligence reading package, (2) to raise some problems for discussion, and (3) to put forward some alternative solutions for consideration.

General Assessment

After looking at the process of preparing the package for a couple of months and interviewing most of the sources of the input, my assessment is rather favorable. The final product, in particular the memorandum prepared for your signature in the Situation Room, is adequate. However, the product is more satisfactory than the process leading to it.

In one of our earlier discussions you expressed some concern as to whether the process worked in such a way as to pick up essentially all available information. I feel I can reassure you on that matter. The process leading to the package on the Presidential desk each morning is fed by what is now the strongest and best part of the U.S. intelligence community; that is, its current intelligence activities. Over the last five or six years there has been a strong development of the current intelligence effort, including the installation of 24-hour-a-day operations centers in all

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important elements of the community. This development has taken place partly as an adaptation to the crisis atmosphere of the '60s, the two Cuba crises, etc. Pressures for an information system capable of staying on top of fast-breaking events were increased by President Johnson's continuous demand for up-to-date intelligence and other information input. Thus, you are now tapping a very vigorous, responsive, well established, government-wide activity that surveys all of the collected material and funnels it up to the top of the governmental bureaucracy and to the White House.

The part of the total package produced in the Situation Room provides a unique product with its close blending of policy analysis and intelligence. Analysts in the intelligence community are inhibited, both by U.S. intelligence doctrine and by their more limited awareness of policy issues and Presidential concerns, from producing a similar product. Comparison of the substantive coverage of topics in the CIA PDB and the Situation Room product shows this, although it is clear from other evidence that some parts of the NSC staff include more policy analysis than others. Hence, in some geographic areas there is probably more of a difference between the CIA PDB and the Situation Room product that there is in other areas.

The involvement of the NSC staff in the preparation of the Situation Room product is the proximate cause of this difference in the type of analysis and comment. A survey undertaken by the people in the Situation Room for me showed that during a selected period 60% of the items came from the NSC staff, another 20% were prepared by McManis and Fazio sometimes with interaction with staff members, and 20% were reproductions of items from CIA, NSA, or DIA publications.

In any case, the memorandum signed by you and prepared in the Situation Room is a success; it probably is the only part of the package which the President regularly reads. Indeed, judging from a survey of marginal jottings by the President, it may be the only piece he ever reads. This should be gratifying to you. But this situation can lead to unexpected and unwanted responsibilities and problems. I want to discuss some of the problems I see.

[illegible]

1. The Current Anomalous Position of the CIA PDB

The success of the Situation Room product probably has driven the CIA PDB out of the President's focus of attention. However, a survey of the Situation Room product and the PDB shows that there is about one-third overlap in coverage in the two products. That is, only about one-third of the items in the PDB are reported in the Situation Room product. Thus, two-thirds of the items in the PDB the President may never see. Probably they are of lesser importance to him since a lot of thought goes into the selection of the one-third overlap for inclusion in the Situation Room product.

However, an ambiguous situation exists. The selection procedures for inclusion in the Situation Room product may not be wholly consistent with the widely shared suspicion that the President does not ever read the CIA PDB. If one really believes that the PDB is not read, is one-third overlap too low? Should one provide more overlap, perhaps changing the format of the Situation Room product to make this easier? Does not the current level of overlap tend to make the President feel it is safe not to read the CIA PDB? Should steps be taken to shut off production of the PDB? A great amount of energy and talent goes into producing the PDB. (See Tab A for a description of the process, written by [redacted] of CIA.) It may now be largely wasted effort. How can it be saved or made useful?

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This situation presents a number of awkward problems. The CIA is not likely to suggest stopping production of the PDB. CIA has a major institutional stake in the PDB. It will not give it up easily. Moreover, in a recent discussion with Jack Smith, he strongly expressed his view that the CIA people consider themselves almost as part of the President's staff. They have no other natural superior. I told him I thought that view somewhat unrealistic in organizational and bureaucratic terms. But nonetheless, it may be the view of some of them and suggestive of their likely reluctance to give up publication of the PDB. Over time they are likely to find out about the current situation if it persists. Their likely reaction

Yes I discussed too much

is not clear. A possible CIA response could be to continue publication, but to put in less effort and allow the quality to slip, hoping to live through the current situation and later regain the position the PDB had with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

However, you need to address this problem. What worries me is that: (a) You may get in trouble with the President if post hoc an important item slipped by him because it was in the CIA PDB but not the Situation Room product, especially if he has come to feel, or has been encouraged to feel, that everything of importance to him is included in the Situation Room product. (b) The PDB goes to the SECDEF and Secretary of State, who may not be aware the President seldom reads it. They may be almost entirely unaware of the Situation Room product and its displacement of the PDB. This could lead to some misunderstandings.

I suggest we discuss some solutions or strategies for changing the current situation. But I may be too concerned because of some things in the situation I am not aware of.

One possible solution is a format for the total package which could make the CIA PDB input an integral part. Another idea is that of a President's brief divided in two parts -- one part to include items like those currently supplied by the NSC staff, that is, items based in part on intelligence inputs but including policy discussion and other analysis; the second part to include a number of brief information items. There might be some reduction in the number of longer analytic items supplied by the NSC staff and an increase in the number of brief news items. If the format of the President's reading package were changed in this direction, one could ask CIA to provide the news item portion, overlap in coverage between the two parts of the package being eliminated through daily discussion between McManis/Fazio and [redacted]

Another alternative would be to leave the Situation Room product as it is, but include at the end of it a reference to other news items appearing in the PDB. At present, if the President does not even open the PDB, there is no way of his being aware of what items it includes that might be of interest to him.

2. Deficiencies of Feedback and Guidance

As my investigation of the process of preparing the President's morning intelligence brief proceeded, I became more and more aware of a feedback and guidance problem. As the process now operates, it does not produce much guidance and/or feedback for those providing inputs. There are a number of factors that produce this situation, and it varies in effect from one input source to another. Several of the proposals made later in this report are primarily motivated by my belief that some steps should be taken to improve feedback and guidance. You and the President will be better served if some progress can be made in this area.

Neither you nor the President can read all of the relevant information available; others must sort, screen, and package the information. The less feedback and guidance the "others" get, the less assurance there is that you and the President get what is wanted and needed. Today CIA writes a type of newspaper, the PDB, hoping it is interesting and relevant. The Situation Room people and the NSC staff collaborate to produce a memorandum for your signature. They have more effective feedback and guidance than CIA does, but almost uniformly feel they don't get enough to do as good a job as could be done. I feel there is a real problem here, and it starts at your and the President's levels.

(Let me say my investigation of current sources of feedback and guidance made it clear that the current NSC process produces a good deal more feedback and guidance to the bureaucracy as to what the important issues are than the prior arrangements. Most people I talked to were quite pleased with the new NSC process and the NSSM study process, for this reason.)

I will deal with the feedback problem as it applies to the NSC staff, below. Here I want to address the feedback and guidance problem of those producing the PDB. They feel they do not get much direct guidance or feedback they can use in the selection of their items. Currently they describe the process used to pick items for the PDB as follows:

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(a) There are usually one or two obvious items in every day's news (there is for these an overlap problem with the Situation Room product that may be settled in phone conversations with McManis);

(b) Good additional items are surprise developments: coups, deaths of important foreign governmental people, etc.;

(c) Continuing items known to be of interest: Vietnam, the Middle East situation;

(d) Soviet missile tests and new Soviet aircraft; usually these are reports containing the results of completed intelligence studies and, as such, are different from the usual current intelligence content of the PDB;

(e) Occasionally an item will be weeded out of the draft PDB late in the day on the basis of a call from McManis that it has already been sufficiently covered;

(f) Some items are included with the conscious notion of making a record (not being caught out later);

(g) [redacted] makes a call to Al Haig perhaps once every two weeks to get guidance on a specific item, but doesn't want to wear out his welcome by calling more frequently.

As you can see from the above, the selection process is based mainly on very general knowledge of what is of interest to the President. It is derived in part from the participation in the NSC process of people like Helms and Jack Smith, but to a large extent, I believe, from a sense of what's timely as judged from the New York Times, press, and wire service coverage. There is rather little specific feedback within the process itself that comes directly from the White House as to the President's interests and concerns.

What to do about this will depend on what you decide to do about the PDB.

3. Problems in Preparing the Situation Room Product

Lack of Feedback. -- There is no way for most NSC staff people preparing inputs to know whether the President reads their items, what his reaction was, how their inputs could be improved, etc. Clearly the position of people on the NSC staff is better than of those preparing the PDB. They get a lot of indirect signals about what is of interest to the President and what you feel is of interest to him. But the process of preparing the morning reading package does not involve any direct feedback from the President. Occasionally there are marginal comments. But a survey showed relatively few Presidential comments; about one in six of the packages have any marginal comments in them. Frequency of comment seems to fluctuate considerably over time. In the sample period covered, there was a clustering of the comments in a period of one week, suggesting that for some reason the President was reading the material more closely and/or was more disposed during that week to make comments. Comments by several of the staff have indicated that they are not sufficiently aware of the low frequency of the Presidential comments. Some may feel they are being cut off from a more plentiful supply of Presidential marginal notes and comments that does not exist.

It's hard to say what to do about this general feedback problem. Your style of work and that of the President, perhaps, are not conducive to a lot of feedback. Moreover, most of the people who work most actively with you and are in the best position to give feedback to the NSC staff and Situation Room people are themselves very busy. Others are reluctant to impose upon them. I know it is hard for you to find time to provide feedback and guidance. The staff meetings when you attended, everyone agrees, were very fruitful. Even if held infrequently, they are worth considering again.

A totally different sort of solution is discussed below and in Tab C. This involves a major shift in the way in which intelligence and other news items are transmitted to you, and perhaps eventually, to the President. It is something that could, perhaps, be available in

about 18 months when the Situation Room addition is completed and the new computer facilities are installed.

Need for Guidance to the NSC Staff. -- Interviews I have had with all of the major NSC staff contributors convince me that they have not had enough guidance and general information about the President's morning intelligence package. They may not have an adequate framework within which to prepare their own materials. I found that many of the NSC staff people do have a clear idea of what is in the package, how the Situation Room product is related to the CIA PDB, and what overlap exists between them. Several were concerned that they did not know whether in covering an article or an issue they were the only ones covering it for the day or whether it was also in the PDB. I might add that probably they have made no effort to find out. The most organized and active group supplying input are informed on PDB content and use this information both substantively and to avoid undue overlap. Most have no feeling for what is read, whether the Situation Room product and/or the PDB. (See Tab B for a summary of the interviews with NSC staff members.)

In discussing how they went about preparing their input, one or two expressed their concern that they felt they didn't have a good basis for judging how important it was to prepare their items; that is, whether they should spend a lot of effort or not very much. They are reminded daily of the need for product, by phone calls from the Situation Room; but some are left with an ambiguous sense of how important it really is.

One result of this situation is that there is great variability in the amount of effort spent in different subparts of the NSC staff in preparing input. Some groups are very well organized and think of preparing the input as being an important part of their job. These devote considerable time and energy throughout the day. One of these is the Saunders/Hoskinson team that produce almost 50% of the input currently received from the NSC staff. They have the advantage, perhaps, of covering a very active and high interest area, but they are perhaps the most systematically organized to produce input. At the other extreme there are people who have not

[illegible]

organized systematically at all and who pass in an item if they think of it as being of interest. These tend to put much less effort into melding an item of information and policy analysis.

I believe that if there were more guidance to the staff concerning the importance of the Situation Room product, a little more information conveyed about the total package, there might be more uniformity of effort and an improved response by the staff. Such guidance could be conveyed in a staff meeting or by a memo. After discussion with you, I would be glad to draft such a memo.

Changes in the Product. -- I have one change to suggest for your consideration, the switch to a two-part format. Several people questioned whether the total package was not becoming too big; perhaps even the Situation Room product was too long and had too many items involving policy discussion and analysis. You are in the best situation to judge if the size of the package is now excessive, even if the President only reads the Situation Room product. Might not a changed format with fewer analytic items in one section and a second section devoted to a number of short information items be better? Again you are in the best position to judge. I remind you that such a change might be a part of a solution to the PDB problem.

Samples could be prepared of this alternative format by the Situation Room people if you wish to see them.

Need for Secure Telephones. -- As you can see in Tab B, several of the NSC staff check regularly with CIA and State Department contacts when preparing input to the Situation Room product. This interaction would probably be more frequent and more informative if a limited number of secure telephones were available to the NSC staff. Only Frank Chapin, not a contributor to the Situation Room product, has such a phone. The other available secure phone is in the Situation Room. Neither of these two phones is a real alternative to having a few (8 to 12) secure phones in staff members' offices.

A preliminary look at the cost and likely availability of the appropriate equipment suggests that obtaining a limited number of secure

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phones (so-called green phones) turned up no major problems. Cost could be limited by having only two or three lines, a switching system, and 8 to 12 phones. I recommend that this possibility be looked into more thoroughly unless you feel there is some reason why the staff should not have such phones. I believe it is a good idea. Discussion with sources of intelligence input can be freer and more frequent. Some discussion undoubtedly now goes on over unsecure phone lines that ought not to; the secure phones would help to reduce this somewhat.

A More Radical Suggestion for the Future. -- In the course of my investigations I had a number of discussions with Charlie Joyce about the many problems in supplying well selected intelligence information to the President. Out of these developed a proposal for a radical change in the way in which intelligence and other information materials are presented to you, and perhaps could be presented to the President at a later date. This proposed change could significantly alter the whole process of preparing the President's morning reading package; indeed, it might eventually eliminate it altogether as a separate hard-copy item. At present the cost and feasibility of the proposal are unevaluated, but they are under study. Your reactions would be valuable; a lot depends upon how you feel about the proposal. If you definitely don't see yourself liking it, we should drop the idea.

Attached at Tab C are two memoranda that Charlie Joyce wrote to sum up the results of our discussions. In summary, the notion is that the use of available computer technology might allow the development of a very flexible on-line reading program for you and/or the President. The reading program would be available on a TV screen at all times, with controls allowing the reader to pick subjects that he wants to read about, to start reading at a very summary level, to select the areas in which he wants to read in more detail, to stop reading any subject when he is satisfied, and to move on to another. The system could automatically provide feedback on what you and/or the President reads, and how much attention is paid to particular subject areas in the reading program. A button could also be supplied for the reader to indicate his desire

for more material, whether he liked the presentation or not. A microphone could be supplied for dictation of comments and critique.

The essential objective of this system is to supply you and/or the President with a good deal more control over what you read, and to supply feedback to the organizations attempting to supply you with information so they can do a better job. The role of the machinery is simply to make this feedback more available, more effective, and also to allow you to have a richer, more flexible reading program that you can easily reach by the manipulation of a few buttons.

We would favor developing such a system for you, leaving it open as to whether at a later stage the President is supplied with a similar system. Experience with executives in business has shown that their willingness to obtain information from TV consoles and through machinery of one sort or another is highly sensitive to their personal tastes. Some people want nothing to do with such contraptions, others are quite willing to use them. On the whole, the balance of experience has been that top-level executives don't like gadgets. It would undoubtedly be very chancy to try the thing directly on the President. It may be very chancy trying it on you.

If this kind of a system pleased you, in the sense that you found it useful and easy to live with, you might invite the President down to see the information system you had for yourself. He could try it in your office and see how it worked. If he liked it, a duplicate could be provided in his office.

I think you ought to give consideration to this system and discuss it fully, especially with Charlie Joyce, to see whether it seems attractive enough to you to go forward with more detailed system design. Let me say that our notion is that one should keep the size of the system and the complexity of the hardware limited. We believe this need not be a big, fancy system.

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~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

16 January 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Production of the PDB

1. The President's Daily Brief is an all-source daily intelligence publication tailored specifically to the needs of its principal reader. As a result of efforts to achieve maximum comprehensiveness, flexibility, and timeliness, it differs from other daily publications such as the Black CIB in several noteworthy respects:

--It makes use of sources too sensitive even for the Black CIB;

--It is not formally coordinated in the intelligence community (although every effort is of course made to assure that its articles are not at variance with the community's views);

--Its articles are produced by a small staff of highly skilled writers rather than by the OCI desks, and one of the PDB staffers keeps tab on each issue up to the time of publication.

2. Specific criteria for PDB articles have always been hard to define, but they generally reflect what we know and infer about the general interests of the President, as well as what the writers and reviewers (the D/OCI, the DDI, and the DCI) think should be brought to his attention on a given day. They also reflect the feedback we get directly from the NSC staff and from the Director and others in frequent contact with the White House.

3. The four-man PDB staff operates on a four-day work cycle, with each staffer in turn seeing one issue

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through the production process. The book which he and the other staffer on duty put together during the day is a blend of articles taken from the CIB; cullings from other DDI publications; writeups of reports too sensitive to be used elsewhere; responses to the requests of PDB reviewers for coverage of a topic; and self-initiated articles based on the voluminous traffic monitored by the staff itself. The issue begins to take shape in the early afternoon. The drafts are reviewed by the D/OCI or DD/OCI, the DDI, and the DCI beginning at about 1600, and are LDX'd to the White House for information at about 1800. The staffer who "owns" that day's issue comes back in at 0100, updates the drafts and writes new articles as necessary, and oversees the typing and printing of the final version. This is sent at 0600 by courier to the White House and other addressees outside CIA.

4. The following account traces in detail the production process for one hypothetical issue of the PDB. In order to illustrate the variety of ways PDB articles come into being, the hypothetical process involves more items and would-be items than would appear on a typical day. Otherwise the model is fairly representative.

5. The day's two writers arrive between 0830 and 0900, note any messages from the previous night's writer (who went home at about 0700), field any questions from the D/OCI on the morning's issue, and begin to work on the morning's cable take. They start with the overnight traffic left by the night man and then go through the contents of the various PDB boxes in the Watch Office. There they find, in addition to a great deal of raw traffic*, processed intelligence of various kinds

*The PDB staff receives advance copies of all State Department cables coming to CIA, all diplomatic Comint, all TDCSs as well as all of the operational DDP cables that are released to the DDI, most of the military attache traffic and a heavy dose of other military cables, and copies of all items selected by the Watch Office or the News Analysis Officer for the DCI. It also receives especially sensitive clandestine reports via the D/OCI, and it has access to most of the NODIS traffic that comes to the Agency.

including the Watch Office Night Journal, the CIB, the NSA Sigint Summary, uncoordinated "house organs" issued by various OCI and DDI components, and formal memoranda from all DDI substantive components. (On Fridays the PDB staff also receives the Current Intelligence Weekly, but this is rarely a fruitful source of articles since weekly drafts are routinely made available to the PDB during the week.)

6. By mid-morning the following topics have appeared as candidates for PDB articles:

[redacted]

In addition, it quickly becomes apparent that there will probably be an article on the [redacted] military situation, and one staffer begins to accumulate bits and pieces of press, comint, and embassy reporting for it.

7. At 1000 one of the writers attends Western Hemisphere Division's regular morning meeting. There he learns that [redacted] was pretty ordinary boilerplate but that the division is writing a CIB on the possibility of increased urban terrorism in [redacted] The information on this topic is fairly extensive and seems to need broader treatment; the division therefore agrees to expand its CIB into an annex for the PDB, to be published later in the week.

8. Similarly, at European Division's morning meeting at 1030 the PDB writer learns that the report [redacted] was already being considered for the CIB. The division offers to submit a paragraph of slightly speculative interpretation for the PDB version of the item.

9. At this point the D/OCI brings in a highly sensitive clandestine cable on [redacted]

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noting that the Director wants it covered in the PDB. OCI's [redacted] is asked to provide some comment on the report.

10. At 1100 a PDB staffer sits in on the meeting to block out the day's CIB. In addition to items on [redacted] he learns that:

--OSR will do an item on [redacted]

--a brief will be written on the military situation in [redacted]

--OER will submit an article on [redacted]

--the latest [redacted] statistics will be covered in a brief.

These articles, in addition to the clandestine report on [redacted] become the prime candidates for PDB treatment.

11. CIB drafts begin to come in shortly after lunch. The PDB writers prune some articles of excess verbiage, add a paragraph or two of interpretation to some, and rewrite a few others to make the message more pointed. (Some CIB articles, of course, are printed virtually without change.) All changes of any substance are checked out with the OCI desks. In addition, a sensitive clandestine report is received [redacted] which cannot be used in the CIB but which sheds useful light on the general military situation. This is melded with the CIB draft.

12. At 1600 the drafts are submitted to the D/OCI, who provides substantive and editorial suggestions which necessitate further rewriting and consultation with the OCI desks. After these revisions, the drafts are retyped and sent to the DDI and the DCI, who request still further revisions. The drafts are then LDX'd to the White House to give the NSC Staff advance notice of what will be in the book in the morning. The PDB writers leave at about 1800. On this occasion the primary writer knows of two assignments he will have when he comes back in:

--The DCI has asked that one paragraph in the [redacted] CIB be changed, and this will obviously have to be reflected in the PDB as well;

--A late cable has arrived from [redacted] reporting a conversation with [redacted] on the subject of [redacted] The D/OCI has asked for both a CIB and a PDB article on the cable.

The White House Situation Room is informed that these changes and additions will be forthcoming.

13. When the primary writer comes back to work, he scans the new traffic, doublechecks that there are no discrepancies between the CIB and PDB drafts, updates the [redacted] article, and writes an article on [redacted] meeting. The White House Situation Room duty officer has called in the meantime to suggest that the article on [redacted] be deleted, since the President has been fully briefed on the topic; that item is therefore pulled. The drafts are given to the typists at 0330, are proofread at 0430, and are printed by 0530, when the PDB writer checks them once again for typos or errors in layout. The couriers leave at 0600, and the writer remains until 0700 to answer any questions raised by the White House.

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SUMMARIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH NSC STAFF CONTRIBUTORS

In the course of my investigations I interviewed most of the major NSC staff contributors to the Situation Room's part of the President's morning intelligence reading package. The questions covered in each interview were:

1. How do you prepare your input to the Situation Room's part of the President's morning intelligence package? Is anyone specially assigned in your area to prepare these inputs?

2. What are the major sources that you use in preparing inputs?

3. What interface do you have with CIA, State, and others in the course of your preparations? What feedback may this generate for them?

4. What do you feel you get out of this effort? Is it only a chore?

5. What could be done to improve the process? What would lead to increased or better output in your area?

The following is a summary of five of the interviews:

Interview No. 1

This area had one person assigned the job of preparing inputs to the daily brief. An effort was made to check views with State, CIA, etc. This involved making 10 to 15 calls a day. Those at the interview agreed that there is a significant need for feedback to the State/CIA people if they are to focus their efforts better. Major sources are State cables and then CIA TDCS reports. The

major value that they found for themselves in the process was that they can feed information to the President with some confidence that he will in fact see it. By this means they can get him up on an area they know they will be raising issues in a little later. These people felt that the only justification for the effort to produce the Situation Room product is the policy focus that can be given to the items. Otherwise, they would be trying to compete with the whole intelligence community to provide information, which they found unlikely they could do.

Interview No. 2

In this area the effort of preparing input is shared by several people, but overall there was a much less organized effort than in the area covered in Interview No. 1. They waited until the end of the day and then scurried around to see what they had. On the whole, the one person interviewed felt they did not have the time, given the press of other duties, to prepare really thoughtful items. Most of the analysis was not very adequate. They try to get newsworthy items, but succeed in supplying very little analysis. Their items derive mainly from State cables, CIA TDCS's; the FBIS ticker is also of some value. Occasionally they note a DIA item and suggest its inclusion to McManis. There is no attempt to feed in information to get the President pumped up on a problem or issue. On the whole, they do not involve themselves with phone calls to analysts out in the agencies.

The interviewee finds the situation rather unsatisfactory, feels that the system of preparing the Situation Room product ought to be changed. As it is now, it is just a burden to him and a source of some uneasiness. If the items really are going to the President, it is important that they be good but, at present, priorities are unclear. There has never been, to his recollection, a clear statement of the importance to be assigned to the preparation of items for the Situation Room product. If a really good item is obtained, usually it is put forward in a separate memo to the President and, hence, this channel competes with the morning reading package.

If things go on much as they are, this person would prefer to have a rough draft prepared by the Situation Room people available at 4:30 p.m. At that time he and other staff members could review the draft. He feels that there is a need of more contact with Henry Kissinger to provide increased guidance concerning preparation of the inputs. How important is the morning reading package? If it really is important, this interviewee thought it should be given much more time than he succeeds in giving it.

Interview No. 3

In this part of the NSC staff several people are involved in preparing materials for the Situation Room product. The principal sources are again the State cables, the CIA TDCS reports. Very little material comes from DIA, principally some summary publications, and occasionally a desk officer at State may call them with a particular hot item. Before including an item they will usually talk to CIA or to the desk officer to check the validity of the source, the weight people in the agencies give to the particular item. They may also check in the case of State to ascertain possible U.S. actions already underway. Very occasionally, an NSA intercept is used as a source of material.

Preparation of inputs is viewed mainly as a chore, with some positive side benefits. It keeps one on his toes and stimulates interaction with State and CIA. It is a vehicle used very occasionally to bring issues before the President and Henry Kissinger. The very occasional feedback via Presidential marginal notes is welcomed, but it is very occasional. Improvement in the process is to be sought in many directions. They would like more feedback, if they could get it, as to interest in the items, how successful their presentation was, etc.

They feel that the 5:30 deadline for submission of items is a bit too early, would prefer it half-an-hour to an hour later. The meetings once held to go over items for the Situation Room product were not very useful unless Henry Kissinger attended. Suggested again

there was need for more feedback on the appropriate length of items, the style, and the format; more guidance as to how much is wanted and what sorts of things are wanted.

Interview No. 4

This person marked the daily take to indicate candidates for items for inclusion. If he notes an issue in the morning, he will alert McManis and try to find out what may have gone in already on this issue -- for example, in the CIA PDB. He watches through the day, and in the latter part of the afternoon dictates his items. He may check them out with some of the other people in his section, but he does in any case check again with McManis and Fazio to see what they are covering, possibly in this same area. He also will alert them for an evening watch for new material on the prospective items. The sources are State cables more often than not. Second are the TDCS's. He usually checks the CIB, the State diplomatic briefs, State incoming cables, the DIA daily to see what they have. He points McManis, when he can, in the direction of good coverage he has noted in some of the summary publications and tries to give guidance as to additional points for McManis to include in anything he may be writing. He checks back with State and CIA as to their interpretation of the items he is planning to include. When he checks at CIA, he taps specific individuals whom he is acquainted with. When he may not be able to prepare his own material that ought to be briefed, he alerts McManis and Fazio who then take over.

In his view the preparation of the items is strictly a chore. Agrees on possible use of items to prepare the President for issues one foresees as being important later. Improvements in the process are to be sought in the following directions: There is a need to be more systematic regarding what goes in to the President. On days with light traffic, he is concerned that fillers are used that may not be of the same quality as the rest of the material. This is a bad practice. He feels that there ought to be a last-minute look in the morning by the staff to catch bad filler. Could the hour of the President's reading be changed to something like 10:00 a.m. ?

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He feels there is a need to know more of what is in the PDB since, after reading it, one might find useful comments to add. One gets a little bit of this from McManis, but the system doesn't work in such a way as to make this as useful as it might be. If there was a change to the 10:00 a.m. deadline for the President's reading, one could review the PDB, as well as the Situation Room product, and catch some of this and make comments.

He raised some questions about the President's reading habits. For example, does he read both the Situation Room-prepared product and the PDB, or one or the other? If he does not read all of the items that are in the package, he felt that there ought to be a headline section or table of contents that would indicate to the President what information items were included in the total package and where he could find them.

Interview No. 5

This staff member prepares about two or three items a week. In his area a good deal is done by McManis and Fazio. He tries to confine his items to things he thinks are really important and doesn't want to play a kind of intelligence game tied in closely with the morning headlines. Sources are mainly the embassy cables because of the nature of his area and what he conceives to be the President's need to know of various operational moves on our own side. The TDCS material is also used, although it often leads to a separate memo outside of the morning reading package. He checks with desk people at State or with people in OCI at CIA.

In his view, preparation of these items is just a service function, something that is perfectly legitimate and part of the job. He doesn't see any special value to him in the process. He feels the system works well enough and has no special suggestions on how to improve it.

He registers a complaint concerning the requirement for the retyping of State cables sent to the President as a supporting Tab. This is a lot of work, especially since some of the cables are seven and

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eight pages long. He raises the question as to "Does the President really read the Tabs, what is the payoff for retyping the cables?"

He felt that feedback in general was relatively adequate, especially to the memos that he writes outside of the morning reading material. He, as in the case of several others, had questions of how important the morning reading material was. Did the President really read it? What, in fact, was included in the total package? Through his questions he indicated that he had no good picture of the morning package, what the President read, what overlap there was between the CIA PDB and the Situation Room product. He felt that more information on this, more guidance, would be useful.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 6, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR ANDREW MARSHALL

FROM: Charles Joyce CJ.

SUBJECT: Possible Technical Improvements in Handling the President's Daily Brief

In our discussion yesterday, you mentioned the desirability of getting feedback on what the President likes to read, as a means for improving the selection of information for him.

We are also both aware of the problem of information overload. Because the President can't read all of the relevant information available to him, others must sort, screen and rewrite information for the President. When these "others" operate in a vacuum, there is no assurance that the President gets what he wants or needs. If there were some way to give the President more control over the screening process, the results would presumably be beneficial.

Putting it another way, today, people write "newspapers" for the President hoping that they are interesting and relevant, and the President must read these newspapers to stay on top of what is going on. A desirable alternative, it would seem, would be a "reading program" available to the President at all times, always current, with controls allowing the President to:

(1) pick subjects he wants to read about,

(2) start reading at a very summary level,

(3) select the areas in which he wants to read in more detail, and

(4) stop reading any subject when he is satisfied and move on to another.

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In addition to having such a "reading program" available, it would be necessary to have a threshold function which should select those bits of information which should be actively brought to the President's attention rather than simply being available.

The foregoing describes a somewhat idealized goal, but one which could be approached. There are some technological capabilities which might be useful in approaching such a goal.

The information contained in the daily intelligence brief, and the backup summaries, and the backups to the backups, etc., could be stored in one of a variety of forms (microfilm, video tape, or digitally) and made available through a TV-like viewer. The information could be organized in some kind of hierarchy of detail, with a subject list at the top, a summary for each subject, and references to a more detailed discussion of the various points. The total information available would be much greater than the President would read; he would control the breadth and depth of his reading.

In addition to providing the reader with control, such a system could easily provide feedback on what was read. With a simply designed push button device, it could also provide feedback on whether the reader was satisfied with what he read.

In short, use of such a system would provide significant degrees of reader control and feedback, the missing ingredients in the current way of doing business.

To pursue this idea, two areas need to be investigated.

1. How to design the hardware so that the reading capability is as natural and responsive as possible, subject to realism on costs. No one has ever built a system to do this, and there may be some technical problems.

2. How to organize the information into a controlled reading program.

It would be very desirable to assess the utility of such a system soon, because if people here get interested in it, it will have a significant impact on the selection of hardware for the new Situation Room.

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I can get the first area studied in any one of a variety of ways. We need to talk more about how to do the second. Would you want to try this? Would you want to have an outsider do it under contract? Should we take an initial "cut" at the job together and then see what further work is needed?

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

February 13, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR ANDREW MARSHALL

FROM: Charles Joyce CJ

SUBJECT: Description of Proposed On-Line Briefing Capability

This is an attempt to summarize concisely the briefing capability we talked about this morning.

Purpose

The purpose is to improve on present methods for Dr. Kissinger and the President to keep abreast of current developments. These improvements will come about by:

1. Making the briefing stand out from other business by using special forms of presentation (TV-like).

2. Providing continuous feedback to information screening staff on what has been read, whether the material has been satisfactory, and whether more is desired.

3. Providing several levels of detail on a variety of subjects, with easy control of subject and depth by the reader.

   (The value of feedback and control was discussed in my memo of February 6.)

Phases

The capability would be introduced in two phases. In Phase I, the principal reader would be Dr. Kissinger, with inputs controlled by the Situation Room.

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In Phase II, the President would be a reader, and Dr. Kissinger would be involved in the selection of items for the President, in addition to his own use of the system.

Phase I

A. How it looks to the reader.

In Phase I, Dr. Kissinger would have a TV-like screen in his office. Whenever he is alone in the office, the screen would display approximately ten short "headlines," considered by the Situation Room to be the ten most significant current developments which Kissinger should be aware of. Additional pages of headlines would also be available on successive headline "pages." The reader can page through the headline pages by pressing a button.

When the reader wants to find out about any headline, he indicates which one (a variety of means for this are possible) and immediately he gets a one "page" summary on the headline. (A page on the TV tube would be equivalent to about a half of a typewritten page of text.) After reading the page, the reader can push appropriate buttons to:

1. Ask for more information.

2. Indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of the writeup.

3. Select the item as a candidate for the President's Daily Brief.

If the first action is taken and additional pages of information are available in the system, the first additional page will be presented, and successive pages would be accessed by pressing a paging button. After reading any amount of this information, the reader may stop, and again take any one of the above three actions.

If the reader calls for more information after having read whatever is available in the system on a given "headline," the request is transmitted immediately to the Situation Room.

Whenever any information has been called out on a given headline, the headline is moved off the headline "pages" and moved to a separate page containing all of today's "noted" headlines, grouped by subject. These "subject" pages provide repeated access to whatever has already been read, and provide a summary of developments throughout the day which may be used in reviewing material for the President's Daily Brief.

The "headline" pages therefore contain only developments about which the reader has not yet read even the one page summary. The order in which the headlines appear is controlled by the Situation Room in accordance with some judgment about priority. As soon as any item is read, it is removed from the headline page and other items are moved up.

B. How it looks to the Situation Room.

The Situation Room staff would enter into the system items received from the staff, and items developed by the Situation Room based on messages, cables, intelligence reports, etc.

Items received from the staff should include a one "page" summary and a more lengthy discussion as backup.

The Situation Room would write a one "page" summary of other developments, and would enter into the system as backup lengthier reference material selected from messages, wire services, intelligence products or other sources.

As new information develops during the day, the Situation Room would determine whether to remove or modify existing information in the system or add new items. This determination would be made with full knowledge of:

1. What has the reader already seen?

2. How much did he read about it?

3. Did he ask for more?

4. Was he satisfied with what he read?

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As the time approaches to prepare the President's Daily Brief, items which have been identified during the day as "candidates" can be reviewed and collated, possibly edited on-line, and printed out for final review by Dr. Kissinger in hard copy form. (I presume he may want to make editorial changes and would not want to enter these at a console.)

Technical questions.

The principal technical question is how to get departmental and agency products and staff products into the system. There are tradeoffs here between digital versus analog storage and display modes which, in turn, have an impact on input methods. The system should be designed so that the Situation Room does not have to retype materials received from other sources in editorially usable form.

Phase II

Once the capability is developed and shaken down for Dr. Kissinger, consideration can be given to making information available for the President in the same way. This poses new problems, namely:

1. The system would serve two customers who would be in their offices at different times and would make distinctive demands on the system.

2. Presumably, Dr. Kissinger would want to exert some degree of control on the selection and priority ordering of items for the President.

One approach would be to follow the current daily cycle, with Dr. Kissinger reviewing once per day the items to be made available to the President.

It might be desirable to consider updating the President's reading more frequently, but it is not clear whether Dr. Kissinger would want to select individual items without reviewing what the President has already seen and what is currently in the system for the President. If this were too burdensome, Dr. Kissinger would be faced with the choice of relaxing his control over the selection of items for the President or else sticking with a once-per-day update cycle.

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Feedback from the President could be enhanced by providing the President with a handset or microphone, connected to a recorder, into which he could dictate comments as he reads. The comments could be transcribed in the Situation Room and entered into the system for future reference, or fed back to Dr. Kissinger or the staff in hard copy form.