

# Studies in Intelligence

Vol. 63, No. 2 (June 2019) UNCLASSIFIED

Journal of the American Intelligence Professional

## The 1919 “Red Scare” and the Origins of the US-UK Intelligence Relationship

The Future of Analysis

Lessons from Past North Korean Shootdown Attempts

An Interview with *Argo* Producer Chay Carter

### Book Reviews

Churchill: Walking with Destiny  
Spy Pilot  
Grand Improvisation  
Freedom’s Laboratory

Intelligence Officer’s Bookshelf



---

This publication is prepared primarily for the use of US government officials. The format, coverage, and content are designed to meet their requirements. To that end, complete issues of *Studies in Intelligence* may remain classified and are not circulated to the public. These printed unclassified extracts from a classified issue are provided as a courtesy to subscribers with professional or academic interest in the field of intelligence.

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in *Studies in Intelligence* are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US government entity, past or present. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of an article's factual statements and interpretations.

*Studies in Intelligence* often contains material created by individuals other than US government employees and, accordingly, such works are appropriately attributed and protected by United States copyright law. Such items should not be reproduced or disseminated without the express permission of the copyright holder. Any potential liability associated with the unauthorized use of copyrighted material from *Studies in Intelligence* rests with the third party infringer.

*Studies in Intelligence* is available on the Internet at: [https:// www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/ index.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/index.html).

Requests for subscriptions should be sent to:

Center for the Study of Intelligence  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, DC 20505

ISSN 1527-0874

---

Cover: The festive opening of the Second Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), 1920-1924. Found in the Collection of State History Museum, Moscow.© Heritage Image Partnership/Alamy Stock Photo.

---

**Mission**

The mission of *Studies in Intelligence* is to stimulate within the Intelligence Community the constructive discussion of important issues of the day, to expand knowledge of lessons learned from past experiences, to increase understanding of the history of the profession, and to provide readers with considered reviews of public media concerning intelligence.

The journal is administered by the Center for the Study of Intelligence, which includes the CIA's History Staff, CIA's Lessons Learned Program, and the CIA Museum. CSI also provides the curator of the CIA's Historical Intelligence Collection of Literature. In addition, it houses the Emerging Trends Program, which seeks to identify the impact of future trends on the work of US intelligence.

---

**Contributions**

*Studies in Intelligence* welcomes articles, book reviews, and other communications. Hardcopy material or data discs (preferably in .doc or .rtf formats) may be mailed to:

Editor  
Studies in Intelligence  
Center for the Study of Intelligence  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, DC 20505

---

**Awards**

The Sherman Kent Award of \$3,500 is offered annually for the most significant contribution to the literature of intelligence submitted for publication in *Studies*. The prize may be divided if two or more articles are judged to be of equal merit, or it may be withheld if no article is deemed sufficiently outstanding. An additional amount is available for other prizes.

Another monetary award is given in the name of Walter L. Pforzheimer to the graduate or undergraduate student who has written the best article on an intelligence-related subject.

Unless otherwise announced from year to year, articles on any subject within the range of *Studies*' purview, as defined in its masthead, will be considered for the awards. They will be judged primarily on substantive originality and soundness, secondarily on literary qualities. Members of the Studies Editorial Board are excluded from the competition.

The Editorial Board welcomes readers' nominations for awards.

---





CENTER for the STUDY of INTELLIGENCE

Washington, DC 20505

# Studies in Intelligence

Vol. 63, No. 2 (Extracts, June 2019)

## Contents

### EDITORIAL POLICY

Articles for *Studies in Intelligence* may be written on any historical, operational, doctrinal, or theoretical aspect of intelligence.

The final responsibility for accepting or rejecting an article rests with the Editorial Board.

The criterion for publication is whether, in the opinion of the board, the article makes a contribution to the literature of intelligence.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Peter Usowski (Chairman)  
John Bennett  
Dawn Eilenberger  
Steven Galpern  
Catherine S. Higgins  
Gary Keeley  
Stephen O. Maddalena  
Jason Manosevitz  
Terrence Markin  
John McLaughlin  
Fran Moore  
LTG Theodore Nicholas (USA, Ret.)  
Tonya L. Tatum  
Cindy Webb

Members are all active or former Intelligence Community officers. One member is not listed.

### EDITORS

Andres Vaart (Managing Editor)  
Rebecca L. Fisher

### Intelligence Today and Tomorrow

*Looking Ahead*  
**The Future of Analysis** 1  
Joseph W. Gartin

### Historical Perspectives

*A History of Sharing*  
**Special Attaché Boylston Beal, the “Red Scare,” and the Origins of the US-UK Intelligence Relationship, 1919–27** 7  
Mary Samantha Barton

*Addressing Dangers of Airborne Collection*  
**Lessons from Four North Korean Shootdown Attempts during 1959–81** 19  
Richard A. Mobley

### Intelligence in Public Media

*A View from Hollywood*  
**Argo Producer Chay Carter: Thinking about Film and the World of Intelligence** 29  
Interviewed by Peter Usowski and Sara Lichterman

*Churchill: Walking with Destiny* 39  
Reviewed by Thomas G. Coffey

*Spy Pilot: Francis Gary Powers, The U-2 Incident, and a Controversial Cold War Legacy* 41  
Reviewed by David A. Foy

*Grand Improvisation: America Confronts the British Superpower, 1945–1957* 45  
Reviewed by Leslie C.

*Freedom’s Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science* 49  
Reviewed by J.R. Seeger

**Intelligence Officer’s Bookshelf** 53  
Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake and others





# Contributors

**Mary Samantha Barton** received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Virginia in 2016 and joined the Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense as a contract historian in 2017.

**Thomas G. Coffey** is a member of CSI's Lessons Learned Program. His work and frequent reviews focus on the relationship between intelligence and policy.

**Leslie C.** is a career CIA Directorate of Operations officer who has an interest in intelligence history.

**J. E. Leonardson** is the penname of a serving CIA officer.

**David A. Foy** is the Intelligence Community historian on the History Staff of the Center for the Study of Intelligence. He is a frequent contributor of book reviews.

**Joseph W. Gartin** is Deputy Associate Director of CIA for Learning. He has led analysis as vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council, as director of a regional office of analysis in CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, and as chief of the President's Daily Briefing Staff.

**Sarah Lichterman** serves on the staff of CIA's Office of Public Affairs.

**Richard A. Mobley** is a long time military analyst in CIA's Directorate of Analysis.

**Hayden Peake** has served in the CIA's Directorates of Operations and Science and Technology. He has been compiling and writing reviews for the "Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf" since December 2002.

**J. R. Seeger** is a retired CIA operations officer and frequent contributor of reviews.

**Peter Usowski** is the Chairman of the Editorial Board of *Studies in Intelligence* and Director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence.

**Robert W. Wallace** is a retired senior CIA officer and author. He is, with H. Keith Melton, author of *Spycraft: The Secret History of the CIA's Spys, from Communism to Al-Qaeda* and *The Official CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception*.







## The Future of Analysis

Joseph W. Gartin

---

***The field of intelligence analysis is at an inflection point. Behind us, several decades of accomplishment and innovation, chastened at times by errors and shaped by cautious incrementalism. Ahead, a future—as in all knowledge industries—still coming into view.***

The field of intelligence analysis is at an inflection point. Behind us, several decades of accomplishment and innovation, chastened at times by errors and shaped by cautious incrementalism. Ahead, a future—as in all knowledge industries—still coming into view but shaped by the powerful and potentially disruptive effects of artificial intelligence, big data, and machine learning on what has long been an intimately scaled human endeavor, often more art than science, and dependent on individual insights and reputations.

Over the past 30 years I have been involved in writing, leading, and teaching analysis. To be sure, analysis is a craft that has not been fixed in amber, but at no time in my intelligence career have we faced a more fluid analytic landscape. Navigating it will be challenging, and in the face of such a challenge knowing where we started is key to charting the future.

---

### ***Where We Began***

This starts with the namesake of CIA's Sherman Kent School for Intelligence Analysis, where I served as the dean for nearly three years. Creating the school nearly 20 years ago was among the most consequential investments CIA ever made in analysis, and naming it after Sherman Kent was a fitting tribute. Even so, Kent's importance as a founding

father of Allied intelligence analysis is not well understood by many of today's practitioners. Whenever I met with new analysts at the Kent School, I would ask, "Who here has read Sherman Kent?" I would be greeted by very few, if any, raised hands. I liken Kent's writings on intelligence analysis to Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. A lot more people talk about these works than have actually read them.

This is to our detriment, because intelligence analysis is fundamentally about providing an advantage in the planning and execution of national security strategy. At its best, it gives decisionmakers from the Oval Office to the battlefield the time, knowledge, and space to act in defense of the nation. Kent was, and is, central to that objective.

Kent envisioned what he called "an elevated debate," that is, the finest minds engaged in a serious endeavor, steeped in a profound understanding of world history and current events, and organized around a shared foundation of the analytic process. In a collection of Kent's essays on the Board of National Estimates (BNE), collected and published by the Center for the Study of Intelligence in 1994, he articulated a vision that resonates even now:

- I see a Major X write an essay on the theory of indicators and print it

---

The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in this article should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the United States government.

---

---

***I will contend that, as in Kent's day, a significant portion of intelligence analysis still consists of sense-making, the cognitive shortcut of putting new developments into a heuristic framework that we all use to categorize events and anticipate the future.***

---

and have it circulated. I see a Mr. B brood over this essay and write a review of it. I see a Commander C reading both the preceding documents and reviewing them both. . . . I see another man coming forward to produce an original synthesis of all that has gone before. . . . Now if all this sounds ponderous and a drain on time, I can only suggest that, so far, we of the Western tradition have found no faster or more economical way of advancing our understanding.<sup>a</sup>

Kent's work on confidence, probability, estimative statements, and dissents still underpin all-source intelligence analysis today. Even if Kent is no longer as widely read by practitioners, intelligence analysis is still shaped by his approach to the craft. It is threaded through the foundational training offered at the Kent School, in the same way that Machiavelli's observations still permeate the conduct of statecraft.

During my time as director of the *President's Daily Brief Staff* and as vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), whenever I faced a challenge of policy or tradecraft, I looked first to Kent's essays for guidance. In many respects, they remain timeless. I have wondered then, what would happen if Kent were somehow to return and rejoin our ranks? There would be much for him to learn, of course, but

fundamentally, I argue that in many corners of the Intelligence Community, the contours of our analytic work would be familiar to him.

---

***Read Stuff, Write Stuff***

That is because much of what we have done over the years, and in many cases still do, comes down to this: read stuff, write stuff. I do not mean that dismissively. And I realize many readers are already thinking about how the sophisticated fusion of collection and analysis happening in their communities contradicts what I just said. I will return to that later.

For now, I will contend that, as in Kent's day, a significant portion of intelligence analysis still consists of sense-making, the cognitive shortcut of putting new developments into a heuristic framework that we all use to categorize events and anticipate the future. Kent was a gifted thinker and writer, and he surrounded himself with men of similar backgrounds, from a handful of prestigious universities and shaped by the seminal events of the early 20th century. All of them were very good at the same thing: reading stuff, writing stuff.

To be sure, Kent has his critics. He had them at the time, for example in his disagreements with contemporaries about the appropriate distance between policy formulation and intelligence analysis. Kent also tussled, as

would his successors, over proximity to the director of central intelligence and the independence of the Board of National Estimates. Most damning, though, are the criticisms aimed at Kent then and now for a signature failing: the 1962 Special National Intelligence Estimate that concluded the Soviet Union would not place strategic weapons in Cuba. Kent was catastrophically wrong, of course, but he consistently defended the estimate, writing in 1964:

*No estimating process can be expected to divine exactly when the enemy is about to make a dramatically wrong decision. We were not brought up to underestimate our enemies.<sup>b</sup>*

In other words, Kent was arguing we weren't wrong, the Russians were wrong. If the Cuba NIE were a one-off mistake, we might take Kent's defense at face value. But it was not, and we know the elevated debate that Kent envisioned has repeatedly proven itself inadequate to the task. In every decade since the modern Allied intelligence community was developed after World War Two, perceived failures of analysis—many so well autopsied that they are popularly shorthanded as “the fall of the Shah” or “collapse of the Soviet Union” or “weapons of mass destruction” and the like—have highlighted the inherent weakness of simply relying on very smart (and very similar) people to read a lot of reports and make accurate assessments.

---

a. Sherman Kent, “The Need for an Intelligence Literature,” in *Studies in Intelligence* 1, no. 1 (1955), 1-11.

b. Sherman Kent, “Cuban Missile Crisis: A Crucial Estimate Relived,” in *Studies in Intelligence* 35, No. 4 (December 1991)

---

## Where We Are

This leads us to the discussion of where we are. In his landmark 2005 book, *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community*, Dr. Rob Johnston observed:

*As it is now practiced, intelligence analysis is art, tradecraft, and science. There are specific tools and techniques to help perform the tasks, but, in the end, it is left to individuals to use their best judgment in making decisions.<sup>a</sup>*

Those judgments were shaped by a fin-de-siècle codification of what I think of broadly as the “style of analysis,” that is, the rules of logic, argumentation, and evidence, but also the presentation and prose of all-source intelligence analysis produced by nearly all intelligence agencies. The emergence of more uniform approaches to hiring, analytic training, editorial review, and publication further reinforced the dominant analytic culture. Some of this occurred organically, some was accelerated by the creation in 2005 of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence; regardless, there is today a high degree of commonality across analytic producers.

No culture or industry is fully insulated from change, however, and nearly 15 years on from Johnston’s assessment, it is clear the business of analysis is in flux. It is impossible to reprise every factor that has contributed, but I will highlight five key drivers that emerged somewhat

---

## ***I will highlight five key drivers that emerged somewhat in parallel but with asynchronous and sometimes discordant effects.***

---

in parallel but with asynchronous and sometimes discordant effects:

- 1. *Structured analytic techniques*, or SATs, intended to counteract biases that cloud our perceptions and warp our predictions, as in the Cuba NIE, have become commonplace. Many have written on this subject, but the late Richards Heuer’s *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, published in 1999, remains the benchmark. Heuer observed, “Intelligence analysts should be self-conscious about their reasoning processes. They should think about how they make judgments and reach conclusions, not just about the judgments and conclusions themselves.”<sup>b</sup>
- 2. *Advances in cognitive sciences* and fields like behavioral economics have shed new light on the complexities of human behavior. For intelligence analysts, we better understand how actors make decisions, how badly humans gauge risk and reward, and how we conflate probability with confidence.
- 3. Improvements in quantitative approaches to forecasting, as in Philip Tetlock’s *Expert Political Judgment*, showed the limits of expertise and the need for structured forecasting tools like the IC Prediction Market.<sup>c</sup> As applied to intelligence analysis, Tetlock and his colleagues argue, with
- 4. Counterterrorism analysis, collection, and operations since 11 September 2001 created a new demand for dynamic, hyper-specific analysis to detect and disrupt individuals or networks. The subject’s vast domain, demonstrable life-and-death importance, and expansive set of practitioners—international, federal, state, local, tribal, private sector, law enforcement, and public institutions—give it an outsized impact on our craft.
- 5. The explosion of data has increased the complexity of an analyst’s job, but likewise potentially increased the fidelity of many assessments. We are awash in ones and zeroes that can be linked, analyzed, and leveraged, if we ask the right questions of the right data sets.

Taken together, these drivers have reshaped the analytic profession and democratized the number of actors producing high-quality analysis outside of government. As a University of Pennsylvania study of global knowledge trends noted, “new technologies have leveled the global playing field in a way that challenges established powers and elite institutions around the world.”<sup>d</sup> In addition

---

a. Rob Johnston, *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community*, (CIA, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005)

b. Richards J. Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (CIA, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999).

c. Philip Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It, How Can We Know?* (Princeton University Press, 2005)

d. James McGann, *Global Go-To Think Tank Index Report* (University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons, 2015)

---

### **What then is the elevated debate of the future? . . . To explore this question, it is useful to extend our horizon out toward 2030.**

---

to the sense-making that Kent would recognize, analysis today encompasses targeting, full-motion remote sensing, financial intelligence, identity intelligence, structured observation management, prediction markets, financial intelligence, activity-based intelligence, data analysis, object-based production, cyber forensics, social media analysis, and more. The list is dizzying.

The next question we must ask is whether all of this has the potential to cohere into a new kind of analysis, one that better realizes Johnston's notion of art, science, and tradecraft but responds to the criticisms of Tetlock and others. What then is the elevated debate of the future?

---

#### **Looking Out to 2030**

To explore this question, it is useful to extend our horizon out toward 2030. This helps us avoid the forecaster's trap of predicting the present without reaching so far as to be in fantasy. So let me describe a future, not the only future but certainly a plausible version, and then talk about how we get there.

It is Monday morning. The analyst checks in with her digital assistant. Maybe the analyst is at home, or in the office, or on vacation. It doesn't matter where, because we have solved the secure-mobile problem. In 2030, we depend on analysts as we always have, but far fewer of them. Ever-smarter algorithms mean analysts are focused on work that is consistently higher on the value

chain. Artificial intelligence sifts data, spots discontinuities, and synthesizes results; analysts provide theory and structure. As Nate Silver observed in his *The Signal and the Noise*, "Statistical inferences are much stronger when backed up by theory or at least some deeper thinking about their root causes."<sup>a</sup>

But beyond just data, the information technology ecosystem our analyst is experiencing knows much more: her past analytic lines, sources of information, competing hypotheses, and alternative views. It also knows how good she is at her job. The digital assistant offers this advice:

You last wrote about political stability in Farlandia six months ago. At that time, you judged the prime minister's coalition government was at risk of fracturing because of public dissatisfaction with the economy, a corruption scandal involving her husband, and wrangling among coalition partners over ministerial positions.

You said Farlandia's tipping into recession would be a precipitating factor in calling for new elections.

Yesterday the economics ministry released GDP figures showing a 2-percent decline over the previous quarter, the third quarterly drop. Farlandia is now in recession.

The prediction market rates the prime minister's chance of dissolving parliament by the end of 2030 at 63 percent, compared to 44 percent last week.

Our Embassy is reporting the prime minister's husband has expatriated \$137 million and is preparing to flee the country.

Sentiment analysis shows a 27-percent increase in negative comments across all social media platforms.

Would you like to update your analysis? Okay, let's get started. I recommend you use structured analytic techniques to test your assumptions and array the variables first.

In addition, consider that the global base rate for a no-confidence vote in similar situations over the past 40 years is 67 percent, slightly above the prediction market.

There is new sensitive compartmented reporting relevant to your account. You need to contact a control officer to gain access.

One report you cited in your previous update has been recalled because the source is now known to be a fabricator. You had made his information a linchpin in your previous assessment. You should revisit your assumptions.

There are 34 other analysts in the Intelligence Community that work on Farlandia. You can find their accuracy ratings on the Analyst Box Scores. I have created a collaboration page and sent invitations to all relevant offices.

Warning. Your personal accuracy rating has fallen three points to 47 percent. Your projections are now slightly worse than flipping a coin. You are currently ineligible for a performance bonus. Improve your score by reviewing this course on the fundamentals of prediction markets.

Is that disturbing? Maybe a little, but we must acknowledge this is a plausible future. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are fast becoming essential parts of analytic processes. Generative Adversarial Networks—networked systems competing with each other to learn faster—are enabling computers to perform tasks that just a few years

---

a. Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—and Some Don't* (Penguin, 2012)

---

***The jobs of the future may not exist yet, but the workforce of the future is already here.***

---

ago seemed profoundly, even exclusively, human, like playing complex board games or recognizing faces. Analysis will not be immune.

Knowledge work, from medicine to law to journalism, is already being outsourced to algorithms, not overseas workers or robots. Oxford University researchers Carl Frye and Michael Osborne in 2013 concluded nearly half of all American jobs were at high risk of being automated within 20 years.<sup>a</sup> These include the kind of jobs many intelligence analysts have, the kind where you read stuff and write stuff. Even if their predictions are overwrought, as some have argued, Kent's confidence in 1980 that "the game still swings on the educated, thoughtful man, not on gadgetry" rings ever more distant.<sup>b</sup>

To be sure, the path toward this future will be uneven. There will be hype and disappointment, and early-adopters will occasionally end up in technology cul-de-sacs. The Silicon Valley mantra of "fail-fast, fail-often" works best with someone else's money; government investments necessarily need to be more

deliberate. But there are things we can do today to help us shape the future of analysis. Here are five suggestions:

- Embrace data-driven analysis as mainstream analysis. There can no longer be a difference between the two. Not every analyst needs to be a data scientist, but every analyst needs to know how to leverage data science.
- Ensure structured analytic techniques and other qualitative tools deliver quantitative improvements. Blind faith in SATs is no more redemptive than any other blind faith.
- Shorten the feedback loop to improve analytic outcomes. In fields from health care to agriculture to manufacturing, data are continuously evaluated and fed back into production cycles. We need to do the same.
- Measure and reward accuracy. In our business, sometimes it is okay to be wrong for the right reasons, but we need dynamic assessments

of analytic accuracy at the lowest organizational level possible.

- Hire, develop, and keep agile talent, and deliver continuous learning opportunities throughout their careers. The jobs of the future may not exist yet, but the workforce of the future is already here.

After more than 30 years, I remain fundamentally optimistic that CIA and the broader Intelligence Community will evolve and thrive. Analysts of every stripe are preternaturally inclined to embrace new sources of information and new ways to improve the quality and relevance of their insights. Collectors everywhere look for every new data source that could close intelligence gaps. Technologists seek the latest and greatest tool in every domain. Leaders at every level want the advantage that data can provide, but so too the multiple viewpoints of a diverse and inclusive workforce. Most importantly, as former NIC Chairman Greg Treverton regularly observed to me, we are in the client-services business. This relentless focus on our client, from the White House to the warfighter, will continue to be our greatest inspiration for innovation and adaptation.



***The author:*** Joseph W. Gartin is Deputy Associate Director of CIA for Learning. He has led analysis as vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council, as director of a regional office of analysis in CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, and as chief of the *President's Daily Brief Staff*.

---

a. Carl Frey and Michael Osborne, *The Future of Employment* (Oxford University Press, 2013)

b. Harold P. Ford, "A Tribute to Sherman Kent" in *Studies in Intelligence* 24, No. 3 (September 1980)



## Special Attaché Boylston Beal, the “Red Scare,” and the Origins of the US-UK Intelligence Relationship, 1919–27

*Mary Samantha Barton*

### *Introduction*

In March 1919, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin created the Third Communist International, or Comintern, to assist communist parties in other countries take power and accelerate the overthrow of world capitalism. In the United States, at a time when union strikes, race riots, and political violence were gripping the nation, Lenin’s call for revolution sparked further unrest and division. In late April, political terrorists mailed parcel bombs to prominent politicians, judges, and state officials. Ultrationalist groups responded by attacking May Day celebrations. State authorities passed sedition laws, banned red flags, and used anti-anarchy laws to arrest writers accused of espousing violence. Two months after the parcel bombs, militants struck again, detonating explosives almost simultaneously in eight different American cities.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the attacks, the US Congress appropriated special funds to bolster the Justice Department’s Bureau of Investigation—the forerunner to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—and tasked it with catching the bombers. The newly-formed General Intelligence Division (GID), better known as the Radical Division, took charge. Under the direction of a young and ambitious lawyer, J. Edgar Hoover, the division focused on deporting members



The scene on Wall Street after an estimated 100 lbs of dynamite packed into a horse-drawn carriage also carrying pieces of steel exploded on Wall Street on 16 September 1920, killing 30 people. Violence such as this immediately following World War I was often attributed to communists groups and led to intensification of efforts to track down communist organizations. The perpetrators of this act were never arrested, although the chief suspects were members of an Italian anarchist group. Photo © Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo, 16 September 1920.

of foreign left-wing organizations. The Justice Department launched two dragnet raids in November and December 1919, arresting thousands of suspected subversives and deporting hundreds more.<sup>2</sup> America’s first Red Scare, an intense period of antiradicalism that followed on the heels of World War I, resulted in a series of stringent immigration laws intended to protect the homeland from foreign dangers.<sup>3</sup>

The 1919 Red Scare also reinvigorated an Anglo-American intelli-

gence alliance that has endured for a century. The First World War had led to direct collaboration between British intelligence agencies and the US federal government, whereby British intelligence officers worked with members of the US Department of State’s Bureau of Secret Intelligence in the Office of the Counselor to counter German subversion and espionage.<sup>4</sup>

a. Before the First World War, the British Home Office, Irish Office, and India Office

The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in this article should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the United States government. © Mary Barton, 2019.

Despite a divergence of interests between political leaders in Washington and London during the postwar years, this information-sharing relationship continued to operate, indeed flourished, among State Department officials and British police and intelligence officers in London after the war. The primary intelligence target, however, had shifted from Imperial Germany to Soviet Bolsheviks and the subversive actions of the Communist International.<sup>5</sup>

State Department records and British intelligence reports show how throughout this period, the Department of State played the lead role in the collection and analysis of political intelligence and in efforts to counter Bolshevism at home and abroad. They also demonstrate how liaison relationships with the British government shaped the department's intelligence activities and assessments of the threat posed by Soviet proxies and how reports from members of the British intelligence services and US diplomats chronicled Soviet support of foreign terrorist organizations through the Comintern.

The burgeoning sharing of intelligence between the United Kingdom and United States contrasted with a general deterioration of postwar Anglo-American relations. Indeed, in most areas of policy, the United States and British Empire functioned more as adversaries than as allies. For example, the former allies competed in a naval buildup and disagreed about economic and foreign policy. US military planners considered the United Kingdom as

---

oversaw limited intelligence operations in the United States, primarily monitoring the activities of Irish and Indian separatists.

the most dangerous antagonist in the Atlantic and developed War Plan RED in response to potential military confrontations, along with RED-ORANGE in case of Anglo-Japanese collaboration.<sup>6</sup>

Americans were also quick to condemn British imperialism, as wartime victories and the mandate system expanded Britain's empire to its largest territorial extent. The British, in turn, never forgot or forgave that the Americans had been "too proud to fight" for the first three years of the Great War. Resentment toward President Woodrow Wilson and his peace settlement, which failed to pass the Senate and kept the United States out of the League of Nations, further eroded trust.<sup>7</sup>

---

### ***Special Assistant Boylston Beal: Letters from London***

Policy elites and intelligence officers on both sides of the Atlantic, however, found common cause in monitoring the revolutionary regime in Russia and its Comintern, and from 1916 to 1928, they had the ideal American interlocutor in a Boston Brahmin lawyer named Boylston Adams Beal. As personalized by Beal—he would characterize his sources as "our friends"<sup>a</sup>—the relationship between trans-Atlantic intelligence elites reflected not only shared interests and common enemies but also genuine friendship. What follows is the story of a forgotten official

---

a. The term "friends" is now associated with British slang for members of the Secret Intelligence Service (or MI6). See *Language of Espionage*, s.v. "friends," accessed 15 May 2019, <https://www.spymuseum.org/education-programs/spy-resources/language-of-espionage/#F>.



Beal passport photo, 1921. (NARA: see endnote 52.)

whose service during and after World War I helped to plant the seeds of an intelligence sharing arrangement that would eventually blossom into the Five Eyes relationship after the Second World War.

Born in Boston on 4 June 1865, Beal would later be described as "a typical Bostonian as evidenced by his name—a Boylston, an Adams, and a Beal," one whose "family was connected with the Boston life in many ways, social, banking, and literary."<sup>8</sup> Beal's ancestors had come to America on the *Mayflower*; his family tree included Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams as well as philanthropist Ward Nicholas Boylston, the namesake of Boston's Boylston Street and Harvard University's Boylston Hall.

While an undergraduate at Harvard, Beal formed what became a lifelong friendship with classmate George Santayana, who would go on to teach philosophy and compose aphorisms. Santayana regarded Beal as a "pure and intense Bostonian of

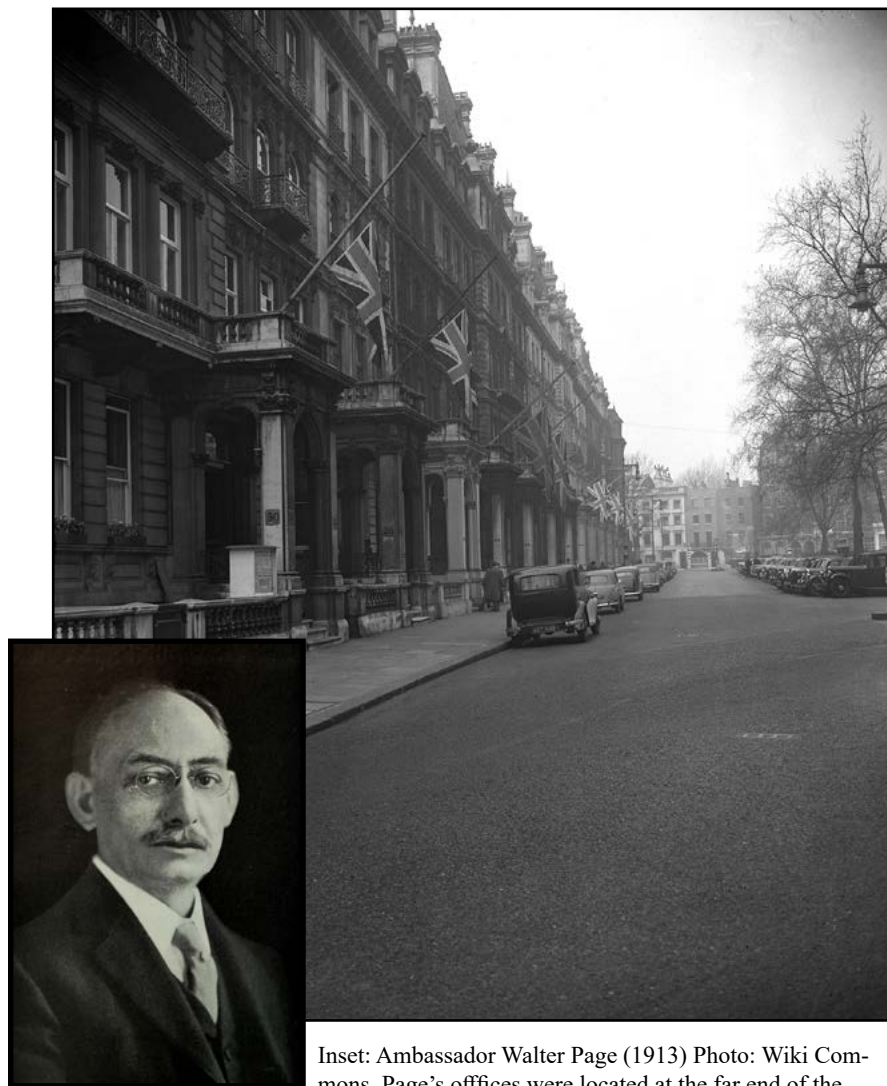


the old school,” who aspired to live in “beautiful places, among refined people with honest and graceful minds,” who “admired traditional religion in the Roman and Anglican forms,” and who “was a pronounced conservative in politics.”<sup>9</sup> After living together for a winter in Berlin following their graduation in 1886, Santayana and Beal reconnected when Beal returned to Harvard to obtain a law degree at a time Santayana was a lecturer there.

Law degree in hand, Beal married Elizabeth Sturgis Grew, the daughter of another esteemed Bostonian family, in October of 1893; they would have a daughter six years later. “I am afraid my life since the last Class Report would not be of much interest to anyone,” Beal submitted to his class secretary for the twentieth anniversary report in 1906. “I have been living quietly here, practicing law in a mild way, chiefly as trustee for several estates. I have been to Europe several times, all of which, however, is, I think, of little interest to anyone.”<sup>10</sup>

The outbreak of the Great War changed the trajectory of Beal’s life. In Berlin in 1914, Beal volunteered at the US embassy. He became a special assistant and oversaw work pertaining to safeguarding British interests in Berlin. He organized a special committee to assist the British government, communicating with Whitehall about the status of British property and the treatment of British subjects in the German Empire.<sup>11</sup>

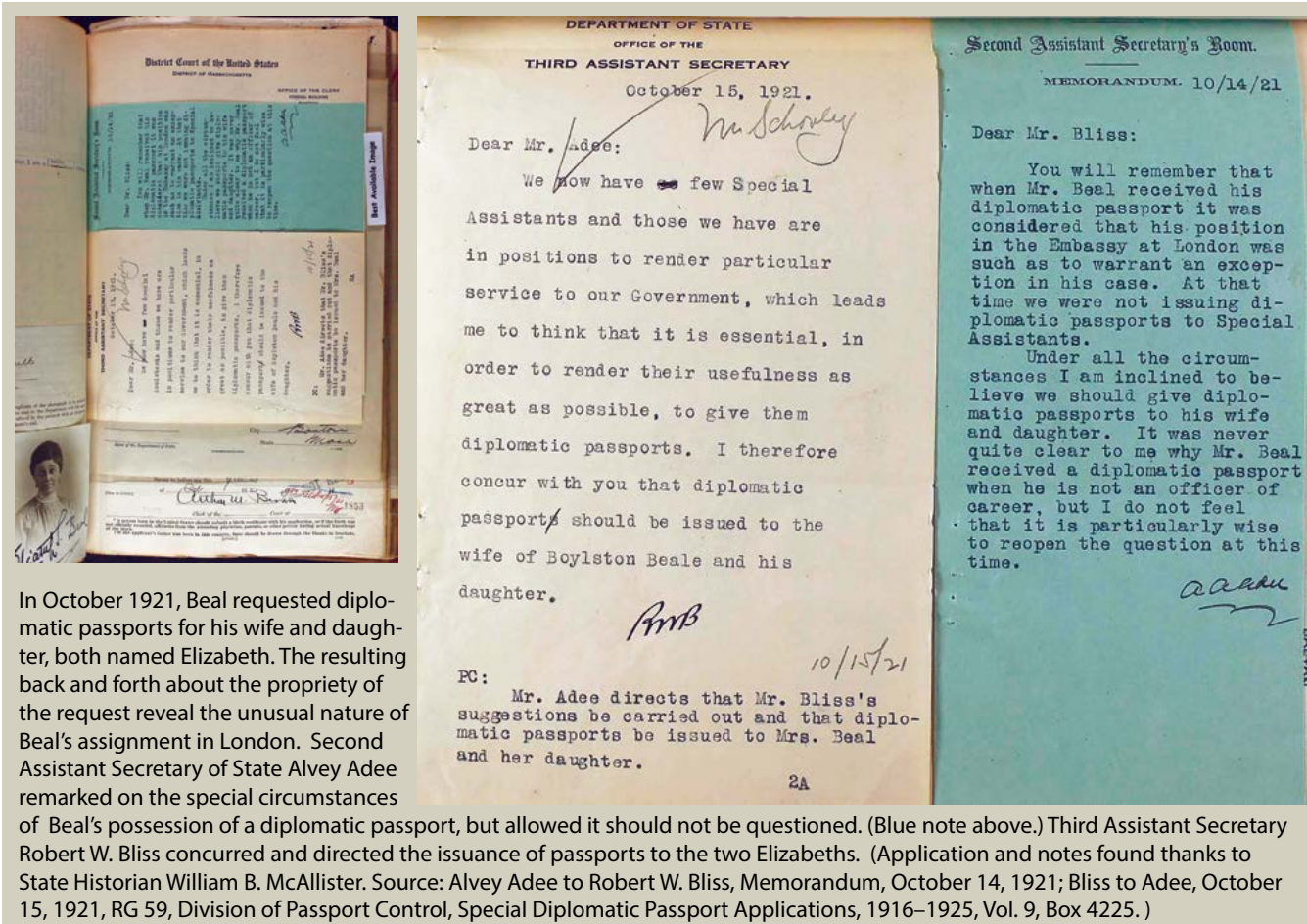
In January 1916, Secretary of State Robert Lansing transferred Beal to London and appointed him a special agent of the Department of State at \$2,000 a year plus travel expenses.<sup>12</sup> The next year, Beal became



Inset: Ambassador Walter Page (1913) Photo: Wiki Commons. Page’s offices were located at the far end of the fashionable rowhouses of Grosvenor Gardens, seen above in 1953. Photo © PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo.

honorary secretary of the London Chapter of the American Red Cross. As part of this work, he visited 23 prison camps in the United Kingdom and reported on the conditions for interned civilians and prisoners of war. In his reports, Beal described accommodations as “quite up to the standard usually prevailing in prison camps,” a description that would have certainly pleased his British hosts.<sup>13</sup>

Once in London, Beal drew upon personal and professional contacts, starting with his sister-in-law, Jane Grew Norton, who kept a residence there along with her husband, John Pierpont Morgan, Jr., whose father was keeping the Allies afloat during the First World War I through loans and financial assistance, even as the United States remained officially neutral. Beal was also close to the ambassador of the United States to the Court of St James’s, Walter Page,



In October 1921, Beal requested diplomatic passports for his wife and daughter, both named Elizabeth. The resulting back and forth about the propriety of the request reveal the unusual nature of Beal's assignment in London. Second Assistant Secretary of State Alvey Adee remarked on the special circumstances of Beal's possession of a diplomatic passport, but allowed it should not be questioned. (Blue note above.) Third Assistant Secretary Robert W. Bliss concurred and directed the issuance of passports to the two Elizabeths. (Application and notes found thanks to State Historian William B. McAllister. Source: Alvey Adee to Robert W. Bliss, Memorandum, October 14, 1921; Bliss to Adee, October 15, 1921, RG 59, Division of Passport Control, Special Diplomatic Passport Applications, 1916-1925, Vol. 9, Box 4225. )

who had alienated President Woodrow Wilson with his fervent pro-British stances long before the United States entered the war as an Associated Power on the side of the Allies in April 1917.

Through Page, Beal dined with other important wartime figures on both sides of the Atlantic, including Admiral William Benson, the first chief of US naval operations, who oversaw the massive transport of the American Expeditionary Forces to France.<sup>14</sup> Beal also witnessed Ambassador Page's close relationship with his British counterparts and his establishment of a precedent of information-sharing at his embassy. The most important information passed

would be the deciphered "Zimmerman telegram."<sup>15</sup>

For much of the war, Anglo-American intelligence-sharing took place in the United States, particularly after the arrival of British intelligence's most successful "agent of influence," Sir William Wiseman, who set up the Secret Intelligence Service's Section V in New York. Wiseman cultivated President Woodrow Wilson's confidant, Colonel Edward House, who put him in touch with State Department Counselor Frank Polk. During the war, the Office of the Counselor worked with British officers on intelligence operations and even coordinated a joint operation with his London counterpart,

dispatching the British writer William Somerset Maugham to Russia.<sup>16</sup>

The wartime intelligence liaison with the United Kingdom continued even after the armistice of November 1918. Many officials in the State Department, sharing a similar class and educational background and having attended elite boarding schools and Ivy League colleges together, retained sympathy for their British counterparts.<sup>17</sup>

Within the State Department, the newly-established Office of the Undersecretary of State replaced the Office of the Counselor and inherited its portfolio. Meanwhile, Beal oversaw the transition of the Anglo-American

intelligence liaison from New York and Washington to the US embassy in London, serving as a special assistant and later honorary counselor at the embassy from 1916 to 1928, forsaking any compensation in the latter position.<sup>18</sup> Tasked with “the more or less under-cover work,” he received confidential information from both Washington and Whitehall, and worked with officers in Britain’s first anti-terrorism unit, Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, and later with the Security Service, or MI5.<sup>a, 19</sup>

While in London, Beal liaised with Captains Hugh Miller and Guy Liddell, two of Special Branch’s most talented intelligence officers, the “friends” Beal referred to in letters back to the Office of the Under Secretary of State.<sup>b</sup> Through Beal and his successors at the embassy, the United States and United Kingdom shared information about the Comintern, American and British communists, and Soviet counterfeiting operations. The British provided reports on American citizens traveling in Europe who had been in contact with anarchists and communists in the United Kingdom; they also transmitted the names of members of the Anglo-American Section of the Comintern and the addresses of American radicals who received instructions from the Red International Labor Union to carry out Bolshevik propaganda work in the Philippines and in China.

a. Special Branch was formed in the 1880s in response to Irish nationalist bombings.

b. Beal regarded Captain Liddell, who would become head of MI5, as “one of the cleverest and most intelligent” of his friends.

### **UK Post-WWI Threat Perceptions**

After initially focusing on the threat of pan-Islam and its ability to mobilize Muslims in British India against the Raj following the end of the Great War, the United Kingdom reoriented its intelligence agencies to combat communist subversion in the empire.<sup>21</sup> The Soviet Union and Communist International replaced the wartime German government as the primary foreign sponsor of colonial unrest, promising support to revolutionary nationalists and Arab jihadists.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Lenin had declared his hostility toward the British Empire at the outset of the October Revolution in 1917. He repudiated the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which had ended the rivalry between the British and Russian empires in Asia, and reinvigorated the “Great Game” of imperial rivalry—only this time as a contest of rival ideologies. “We have up to now devoted too little attention to agitation in Asia,” declared People’s Commissar Leon Trotsky in August 1919, as communist revolutions failed to consume the whole of Europe. “However, the international situation is evidently shaping in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal.”<sup>23</sup> The Comintern subsequently affirmed its commitment to assisting national liberation movements by helping communist operatives supply funds, military equipment, intelligence, and foreign fighters to assist anti-imperial and nationalist uprisings.<sup>24</sup>

Convinced that Bolshevik leaders were employing the rhetoric of national self-determination in order to strengthen Soviet connections with anti-colonial movements in Turkey, Central Asia, Persia (Iran), India, and China, British intelligence officers attempted to increase American cooperation against communist subversion in regions of vital interest to the empire throughout the 1920s. Britain’s anticommunism initiatives reflected the government’s economic and oil interests, along with strategic and imperial imperatives such as the defense of India and transit routes to Asia.<sup>25</sup>

### **Keeping the United States Engaged**

The British even supplied copies of secret domestic intelligence reports prepared by the Home Office, MI5, and Special Branch on revolutionary organizations operating in the UK.<sup>20</sup> British intelligence officers tailored the information they shared with Beal so that British security concerns were harmonized with US homeland security concerns. International communism threatened empire and democracy in equal measure by the British depictions of the threat.

One case in 1926 illustrates how the British, seeing Beal as an intermediary to US policymakers, obscured the line between intelligence and policy advocacy. That year Beal reported to Foggy Bottom: “Our friends tell

me that it has come to their knowledge that one Kamal Hamud at the American University, Beirut, Syria, is proposing to place an order with the Communists here for a quantity of literature.” He proposed that the State Department warn university authorities; also, following a conversation with the chief of the Near East division (and future CIA director), Allen Dulles, he was relaying the information to the American consulate in Beirut.<sup>26</sup>

British officials most certainly hoped that by sharing this information the Americans would intervene to keep communist propaganda from reaching Syria and disseminating outward. US officials reciprocated; each side got something from the oth-

---

***British intelligence officers were keen to provide reports to Beal and US embassy officials demonstrating the links between Moscow and anticolonial organizations that cast the United States as a common foe in liberation struggles.***

---

er. For instance, the British supplied information about developments in Latin America, as Special Branch and the secret services believed this was a region of special interest to the State Department. Beal's dispatches supplied US officials with information about the Chilean government's crackdown on communists and the underground retreat of the Chilean Communist Party.<sup>27</sup> After British authorities raided the All-Russian Cooperative Society (ARCOS) in London, Beal transmitted secret documents found on British communists that included information regarding Comintern agents operating in South American countries.<sup>28</sup>

British intelligence officers were keen to provide reports to Beal and US embassy officials demonstrating the links between Moscow and anticolonial organizations that cast the United States as a common foe in liberation struggles. Beal's "friends" had obtained evidence, which he reported, that the Berlin-based League against Colonial Oppression, also known as the League against Cruelties and Oppression in the Colonies, had contacted the Mexican government in an attempt to secure arms and was "entirely under the control of Moscow and the Third International."<sup>29</sup>

British intelligence agencies also cited connections between the Comintern and pan-Africanism. The embassy in London sent warning that Lovett Fort-Whiteman, an African-American activist, was traveling to Europe to meet with the

Communist Party in Great Britain in the hopes of organizing a World Congress of Negro Peoples. The British police were asking the State Department to keep them apprised of Fort-Whiteman's departure and movements.<sup>30</sup>

In April 1928, London reported to Washington that the Comintern had "ordered the dispatch of six agitators from the Far East to the United States, with instructions to work among employees in textile industries and in important centres." British intelligence asserted that the Comintern would supply the agents with US passports, and that the "agitators" would be graduates of the Lenin Institute for Propaganda. The necessary funds would be paid through Mexican banks and that the agents would take different routes, leaving from Shanghai, Kobe, Hong Kong and Manila to reach the United States.<sup>31</sup>

***The Limits of Sharing***

Despite the close coordination between Beal and British officials, Anglo-American information sharing had its limits. In March 1926, Beal wrote the State Department that one of his most prominent friends had called on him to tell him that British intelligence felt that the center of Irish disaffection against the Free State Government was shifting to the United States. "My friend told me that he felt there were schemes [afoot] in the United States for giving help and assistance to those in Ireland who were unfavorable to the present Free State by either raising

money for that purpose or by sending arms and ammunition to Ireland," Beal reported. He emphasized that communist influence was exacerbating Irish disaffection. Beal probably included this information out of a belief that the State Department would only supply information on Irish groups in the United States who acted under the "order of the 'Reds' and were plotting for the overthrow of established government in Ireland and elsewhere."<sup>32</sup>

More frequently, British officials asked for information about Indian groups in the United States who, they believed, were financing and supporting anti-colonial revolutionaries. During the First World War, British intelligence had emphasized the German sympathies and contacts of Indian revolutionaries in the United States, particularly the leaders of the Ghadr ("Mutiny") party.<sup>a, 33</sup> After the war, the British stressed the communist affiliations of Indian nationalists, while Beal kept US officials informed about communism's encroachment in India and the activities of Indian revolutionaries in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In 1924, Beal wrote of a case in which Indians in Mexico were transmitting funds through the United State to India, and relayed a request from "our friends" to have the State Department quietly ascertain how much money had been moved to India.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Beal transmitted requests for information from the British police about Indian revolu-

---

a. In May 1918, a federal jury in San Francisco convicted 29 members of the Ghadr party for conspiring to foment revolution in India in violation of US neutrality. The "Hindu conspiracy" trial resulted in prison sentences for most of the defendants.

tionaries who traveled to or lived in the United States and American organizations such as the Indo-American Information Bureau and the National League of India that supported “Indian extremists.”<sup>36</sup>

### **More Cautionary Notes**

In May 1925, Beal asked Arthur Lane at the State Department to conduct a background search on an American citizen, Evelyn Roy, the wife of the Indian revolutionary and Comintern agent, Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, alias M. N. Roy. Beal justified the request by informing Washington that Evelyn Roy used a Mexican passport, promoted anti-British and pro-communist publications, and financially supported her husband, a member of the Executive Committee of the Third International.<sup>37</sup> Here Beal was nothing short of asking the State Department to spy on an American citizen on behalf of a foreign government.

Special Branch and MI5 regularly updated Beal about the “Indian terrorist movement” for the entirety of the interwar period. He sent on to the department descriptions of revolvers that were “irregularly imported into India” and which “got into the hands of Bengal revolutionists.” “Our friends would be most grateful if any inquiry might be made of the manufacturers of these revolvers, as to the hands through which they passed until they left America,” he told Lane. “Will you please see if you can let me have something for their information?”<sup>38</sup> Lane disagreed with using the State Department to conduct investigations of Indian revolutionaries in the United States, and told Beal that this type of work fell outside the department’s purview.<sup>39</sup>

---

## **As he took reports from the Brits, Beal took the lead in relaying information from the department to British officials.**

---

In January 1926, Beal wrote another State Department official, Alexander Kirk, asking for information about a man from South Asia residing in California. “I remember having a talk with Arthur Lane about these East Indians in America and his telling me that the feeling was that he could not go too far on Indian lines,” Beal remarked. “Still I cannot help feeling that there are strong indications of Bolshevik influence in India, and I feel sure that, if it seemed right and proper to send information from time to time (I rather think that they appreciate our feeling and so very seldom ask for information), it would be appreciated.”<sup>40</sup>

As he took reports from the Brits, Beal took the lead in relaying information from the department to British officials. For example, he provided British intelligence copies of the US Senate’s hearings on the Soviet Union and additional notes from the Committee on Foreign Relations.<sup>41</sup> In March 1926, Captain Liddell planned to travel to the United States for his honeymoon and wanted to visit Washington, DC. Beal wrote that Liddell wished to meet “some of the men in the Department who are interested in the same sort of work in which he is engaged.” In particular, Liddell wanted to discuss a secret report prepared by Special Branch on the Russian Trade Delegation and Revolutionary Organizations in the United Kingdom and the use of sailors to transmit revolutionary material between European and American ports.<sup>42</sup>

The closely held relationship between Beal and British intelligence sometimes risked public scrutiny. For

example, an incident took place in India, where British authorities kept two American women under surveillance for alleged connections to Indian revolutionaries and searched their belongings upon departure. Afterward, Lane wrote Beal:

*Under the circumstances you may wish to consider the advisability of asking your friends to use great caution in investigating the activities of and keeping under surveillance American citizens abroad. Otherwise, as in the present case, unpleasant reactions are bound to ensue and we will have no end of difficulty in getting ourselves out of hot water. . . . [If] any publicity comes of this case it will not help the well-known cause of Anglo-American relations.*<sup>43</sup>

As British and US officials discovered, revolutionaries in the United States and the United Kingdom were also coordinating their activities. The I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) headquarters in Chicago kept an open channel to the Independent Labor Party in the United Kingdom and coordinated joint protests over the arrest and deportation of individuals for political offenses.<sup>44</sup>

The case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Italian immigrants and anarchists found guilty of murdering a paymaster and his guard during a robbery of a shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts, led to a public outcry in the United Kingdom. The rejection of their appeals sparked further protests in the summer of 1927, as many in Britain wrote and visited the US embassy in

London to lodge complaints about the impending execution of the two men. In May 1927, Washington warned US officials in London to be vigilant, given the increasing threats of violence against American missions, including a recent attempt to blow up the US embassy in Buenos Aires and allegations that bombs had been sent to US embassies in Montevideo and Berne.<sup>45</sup> Protests against the Sacco and Vanzetti case led to bombings in three different American cities in August 1927, as well as attacks on American consulates, embassies, and banks in France, Bulgaria, and Argentina. As the embassy in London received a constant stream of bomb threats, embassy officers were in regular communication with Special Branch about anti-American demonstrations and security of American facilities.<sup>46</sup>

This strong working relationship reflected what was by then a decade of US/UK information-sharing about militant and revolutionary groups. However, the two governments disagreed over labeling revolutionaries as terrorists, as the State Department periodically limited the information it provided Beal and the United Kingdom about the activities of Irish and Indian revolutionaries operating inside the United States. Nonetheless, the information Beal's personal contacts in Special Branch and British intelligence provided about the Comintern reinforced a belief among US officials that communism's expansion threatened US interests and values at home and abroad.<sup>a</sup>

a. The case that the British would eventually use this US fear to influence its behavior in Iran in 1953 is made by Torey L. McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow: The United States, Britain, and the Hidden



The murder trial in 1927 in Massachusetts of Italian immigrants and anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti set off a firestorm of protest around the world, including in England. Concerns about harm to US properties sharpened the US/UK security relationship. Photo © History and Art Collection/Alamy Stock Photo.

### Conclusion

In June 1927, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg abolished the intelligence section of the Office of the Under Secretary of State, the office that received Boylston Beal's reports. The closure led to a shift in the accumulation and interpretation of political intelligence to individual geographic sections. In the case of the Comintern and international communism, this meant information was redirected to the Division of Eastern European Affairs. Beal retired the following year. Captains Hugh Miller and Guy Liddell, both of whom moved to MI5 in 1931, continued to furnish the State Department with information until the late 1930s when Liddell began making overtures to the FBI.<sup>47</sup> While some information sharing with British intelligence officers

continued, anti-communism coordination between the two governments declined as both London and Washington adopted increasingly unilateral foreign policies to escape the depths of the Great Depression.

"Boylston Beal, honorary counselor of the American Embassy, known here as the 'last of the dollar-a-year men,' is leaving London to take up his residence in Boston," the *Washington Post* reported on 19 August 1928.<sup>48</sup> Not reported was that, for the previous decade, Beal had stood at the center of the Anglo-American intelligence relationship—a relationship that was built not only on mutual self interest, but also on highly personal factors. Beal's background and world view attracted him to policy and intelligence elites in London and convinced him of the specialness of the bond.

On 6 February 1926, King George presided over a ceremony in

Justification of Operation TPAJAX," in *Studies in Intelligence* 56, no. 2 (June 2012)

Southampton honoring the captain, officers, and crew of SS *President Roosevelt* which had come to the rescue of members of a British freighter adrift at sea following a storm in the mid-Atlantic.

*“All of us realize that what America says and does is not always understood by England, and that what England says and does is not always understood by America,” proclaimed Boylston Beal on behalf of US Ambassador Alanson Houghton, who was out of the country.<sup>a</sup> “But there are certain deeds*

*which cannot but be understood by the peoples of both lands and they are of inestimable value in drawing together these two great countries and keeping their mutual understanding clear – an understanding upon which many of us feel the well-being of the present world depends.”<sup>49</sup>*

Beal died in Boston in July 1944. He dismissed his twilight years as “uneventful” and never publicly acknowledged what his Harvard classmates described as his “unusual service abroad.”<sup>50</sup>

---

a. Houghton was a Harvard classmate (1886) of Beal’s.

---

### ***Afterword***

A year before Beal died, US and British cryptanalysts had begun to share highly sensitive signals intelligence according to the wartime Communication Intelligence Agreement of 1943. The Second World War had led the United States and Great Britain to formalize the intelligence relationship that had been born during the First World War.<sup>b, 51</sup> The arrangement would continue to grow, incorporating Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in the now well-established “Five Eye” relationship.

---

b. A second agreement followed in 1947, which extended and expanded Anglo-American cooperation into the Cold War. It remains in force today.



***The author:*** Mary Samantha Barton received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Virginia in 2016 and joined the Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense as a contract historian in 2017.

### Endnotes

1. Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1953* (Hill and Wang, 1994), 14–15.
2. Stanley Cohen, *A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician* (Columbia University Press, 1963), 203–07; Charles McCormick, *Seeing Reds: Federal Surveillance of Radicals in the Pittsburgh Mill District, 1917–1921* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 102–03, 110, 148; Regim Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919–1943* (University of Copenhagen Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000), 26–27.
3. M.J. Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830–1970* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 88.
4. See Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (Bloomsbury, 2010), 109–10.
5. Robert Lansing, *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1935), 318–19, 325; Thomas Boghardt, *The Zimmermann Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I* (Naval Institute Press, 2012), 109–10; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *In Spies We Trust: The Story of Western Intelligence* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25.
6. Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 8.
7. Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 259–94; John Moser, *Twisting the Lion's Tail: Anglophobia in the United States, 1921–48* (MacMillan, 1999), 3–16; David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937–41: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 1–36.
8. Harvard College Class of 1886, *Sixtieth Anniversary Report* (Anchor Linotype Printing Co., 1946).
9. M.M. Kirkwood, *Santayana: Saint of the Imagination* (University of Toronto Press, 1961), 33–34.
10. Harvard College Class of 1886, *Secretary's Report No. VI* (The De Vinne Press, 1906), 20.
11. Kenneth Steuer, "Chapter 3 The U.S. Government and Prisoner-of-War Responsibilities," in *Pursuit of an 'Unparalleled Opportunity': The American YMCA and Prisoner of War Diplomacy among the Central Power Nations during World War I, 1914–1923* (Columbia University Press, 2005).
12. Robert Lansing to Boylston Beal, January 27, 1916, Letters From Various Correspondents to Boylston Adams Beal, 1871–1940 (MS Am 1214). Houghton Library, Harvard University [hereafter Beal Letters, Harvard].
13. James Wilford Garner, *International Law and the World War* (Longmans, Greene and Company, 1920) vol. 2, 14.
14. Walter Page to Boylston Beal, November 9, 1917, Beal Letters, Harvard.
15. Boghardt, *The Zimmerman Telegram*.
16. Norman Thwaites to William Wiseman, November 22, 1918, Wiseman Willam George Eden Papers, MS 666, Series I, Box 3, Folder 84, Manuscripts & Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT; In 1928, William Somerset Maugham published *Ashenden: The British Agent* (Heinemann, 1928), a series of fictional short stories based on his spy days in Russia when he attempted to help the Russian Provisional Government defeat the Bolsheviks.
17. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Cloak and Dollar: A History of American Secret Intelligence* (Yale University Press, 2002), 60–80.
18. Richard Spence, "Englishmen in New York: The SIS American Station, 1915–21," *Intelligence and National Security* 19, no. 3 (2004): 511–37.
19. William R. Castle, Jr., Department of State, Washington, DC to Ray Atherton, Secretary, American Embassy, London, August 10, 1927 Record Group (RG) 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, U.S. National Archives (NARA) [hereafter, NARA], College Park, MD.
20. Boylston Beal to Norman Armour, April 11, 1924; Boylston Beal to Norman Armour, April 23, 1924; Boylston Beal to Norman Armour, May 21, 1924, Record Group (RG) 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
21. Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (University of California Press, 2008), 38, 90; Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and Their Roads from Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 19–20; Reconstitution of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest, March-May 1926, L/P&J/12/156; Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest, Turkish Pan-Islamic Activities, Relations with Russia, September 8, 1923, L/P&J/12/127, India Office Records, British Library (BL), London, UK.
22. Calder Walton, *Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire* (William Collins, 2013), 8–15.
23. Leon Trotsky, August 5, 1919 in *The Trotsky Papers, 1917–22*, vol. 1, ed. Jan. M. Meijer (Mouton & Co., 1964), 621–27.
24. David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (Grove Press, 2009), 237–38; Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917–1991*, trans. Allan Cameron (Oxford University Press, 2014), 54.
25. David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 424–25, 510, 514, 560, 562.
26. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, May 12, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
27. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, March 31, 1927, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.



28. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, June 18, 1927, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
29. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, December 31, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
30. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, May 27, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA. A member of the Communist Party, Fort-Whiteman received Comintern training in the Soviet Union and supported the cause of an American Negro Labor Congress. He died in a Soviet labor camp following Stalin's 1936–38 purges.
31. Ray Atherton to Robert Kelley, Division of Eastern European Affairs, April 20, 1928, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
32. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, March 25, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
33. See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.
34. Boylston Beal to Norman Armour, April 29, 1924, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
35. Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, August 5, 1924, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
36. Frederick Hibbard to Arthur Lane, October 3, 1924; Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, January 12, 1925; Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, January 31, 1925; Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, February 20, 1925; Frederick P. Hibbard to Arthur Lane, October 3, 1925, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
37. Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, May 29, 1925, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
38. Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, September 17, 1925, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
39. Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, June 13, 1925, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
40. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, January 11, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
41. Boylston Beal to Arthur Lane, June 3, 1924, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
42. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, March 29, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
43. Arthur Lane to Boylston Beal, May 5, 1926, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
44. Boylston Beal to Norman Armour, May 3, 1924, RG 59, Office of the Counselor / Under Secretary and the Chief Special Agent, Archives II, NARA.
45. Paul Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (Princeton University Press, 1991), 3-4; Boylston Beal to Captain G.M. Liddell, July 22, 1927, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), London, UK, MEPO 38/97.
46. Ray Atherton to Lt. Col J.F.C. Carter, New Scotland Yard, August 8, 1927, TNA, MEPO 38/97; Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, August 11, 1927, TNA, MEPO 38/97.
47. Boylston Beal to Alexander Kirk, February 18, 1928, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts Diplomatic Posts, Great Britain, Volume 1270, Archives II, NARA; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *American Espionage: From Secret Service to CIA* (The Free Press, 1977), 128–29; Raymond J. Batvinis, *The Origins of FBI Counterintelligence* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 61–63; Jeffery, MI6, 253–55.
48. “London Farewells Last U.S. Dollar-Year Man,” *The Washington Post*, August 19, 1928, ES13.
49. “Ovation for Captain Fried,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 1926, 25.
50. Harvard College Class of 1886, *Sixtieth Anniversary Report* (Anchor Linotype Printing Co., 1946).
51. See Boghardt, The Zimmermann Telegram, 244.
52. Boylston A. Beal passport photo can be found in RG 59 Division of Passport Control, Special Passport Applications, 1914–1925, Volume 3, Box 4190, NARA.





## Lessons from Four North Korean Shootdown Attempts, 1959–81

Richard A. Mobley

---

**Over the past decade, newly declassified records and published accounts of aircrew members shed light on four North Korean attempts to shoot down US reconnaissance aircraft. These records provided lessons learned for military and IC personnel orchestrating such operations during the Cold War.**

*This article is dedicated to the 31 crewmen of a U.S. Navy EC-121 (PR-21) who were killed while flying a signals intelligence mission on 15 April 1969 when a North Korean MiG-21 shot them down approximately 80 nautical miles (nm) off the North Korean coast.*

Over the past decade, newly declassified records and published accounts of aircrew members shed light on four North Korean attempts to shoot down US reconnaissance aircraft. These records provided lessons learned for military and IC personnel orchestrating such operations during the Cold War. Previously released material revealing the broad outlines of each incident along with the more recent evidence reveal the long-term challenges in warning against low-signature, tactical episodes such as shootdown attempts, but the material also shows the ways in which the military and IC tweaked the Cold War programs to reduce the risks to airborne collectors.

Although Soviet, Warsaw Pact, Chinese, and North Korean forces attacked dozens of US intelligence collection aircraft during the Cold War, I will focus on only four incidents involving North Korea between 1959 and 1981 because they were highly publicized, deliberate, and methodical attacks against platforms unques-

tionably in international airspace. The incidents include attacks against

- a Navy P4M-1Q Mercator (16 June 1959),
- an Air Force RB-47 (27 April 1965),
- an Air Force SR-71 (26 August 1981),
- and the catastrophic shootdown of the Navy EC-121 with 31 people aboard (15 April 1969) to whom this study is dedicated.

---

### CONTEXT

#### US Collection Requirements and PARPRO Missions.

The publicly released material offers context for the incidents, including details on the incentives driving collection, the methodology in their conduct, guidance for self-protective measures, and heightened North Korean sensitivity and ability to attack aircraft operating off its coasts. According to a 1989 National Security Agency (NSA) history of the EC-121 shootdown (hereafter referred to as “NSA history”), the United States increasingly used aircraft for communications intelligence collection in the 1950s as it responded to increasing Soviet use of line-of-site VHF signals, best intercepted within 50 to 70 nm of the transmitter.<sup>1</sup>

---

The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in this article should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the United States government.

---

### Four Attempts by North Korea to Shoot Down American Aircraft, 1959-81



Images are official US Navy and US Air Force photos.

MPG 19-5883 6-19

As for North Korea, an Intelligence Community assessment noted in 1969 that peripheral reconnaissance missions were essential because of the priority the IC accorded to the North Korean threat, the need for updates on Pyongyang's military posture, and major intelligence gaps on the North. The IC relied on "repetitive missions" to incrementally provide indications and warning, detect military buildups, monitor general military activity, and gain insight into North Korean weapons systems.<sup>2</sup> Such requirements probably accounted for the large number of missions flown within 80 nm of the North Korean coast and establishment of guidelines that typically allowed collectors to approach within 40 nm of North Korea.

For example, between January 1968 and April 1969, the United States flew 976 reconnaissance missions within a zone extending north of the DMZ and within 60 nm of the North Korean east coast, and flew 190 such missions in the Sea of Japan during January through March 1969, according to an internal Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) document and a congressional report on the EC-121 incident.<sup>3</sup> To put it differently, 130 approved reconnaissance tracks covered Korea in 1969, according to the JCS, suggesting an extensive collection effort.<sup>4</sup>

Defense Department (DoD) coordinated aircraft on missions in the 1960s using the Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program (PARPRO), which stipulated procedures for mission approval and command and control. Support for the flights off North Korea entailed US radar tracking of the reconnaissance aircraft and—when the collector was out of

---

***Pyongyang defended its airspace more fiercely during this period than it had before and insisted publicly and privately that it would shoot down US aircraft violating its airspace.***

---

friendly radar range—monitoring signals intelligence on foreign radars and air defense systems to determine reactions to the reconnaissance aircraft, according to the NSA history, congressional accounts, and President Richard Nixon's public account of the EC-121 shootdown.<sup>5</sup> SIGINT sites monitoring radar networks would warn the aircraft of potentially dangerous conditions, such as approaching enemy aircraft.<sup>6</sup>

**North Korean motivations**

The worst of the attacks occurred during the so-called "second Korean war" between 1966 and 1969, during which Kim Il Sung pushed to encourage an uprising in South Korea by sending commando teams into the Republic of Korea (ROK) to engage in unconventional warfare attacks. Pyongyang judged that US targets were fair game during this period when, for example, North Korean commandos attacked two US barracks in May 1967, killing or wounding 21 US personnel.<sup>7</sup> The context was thus one in which the North had become more willing to cause US casualties.

Pyongyang defended its airspace more fiercely during this period than it had before and insisted publicly and privately that it would shoot down US aircraft violating its airspace. In discussions with Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Nikolai Sudarikov on 16 April 1969, just after the EC-121 shootdown, Deputy Foreign Minister Heo Dam said the North was "ready to respond to retaliation with retaliation, and total war

with total war." He added that the Americans had not drawn the "proper lessons" from the *USS Pueblo* seizure in 1968.<sup>8</sup>

North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Seong-Cheol the same day told the ambassador that shootdowns of aircraft violating its airspace over water were not dissimilar to the North's history of attacking aircraft violating its border along the DMZ, according to a Soviet record of the conversation. The foreign minister downplayed the shootdown, saying, "We have this ordinary matter. We've shot down US planes before, and similar incidents are possible in the future. He elaborated by sharing a philosophy that attacks on intruding US reconnaissance planes helped the North Koreans avert a larger war:

*If we sit with folded arms when a violator intrudes into our spaces, two planes will appear tomorrow, then four, five, etc. This would lead to an increase of the danger of war. But if a firm rebuff is given, then this will diminish the danger of an outbreak of war. When the Americans understand there is a weak enemy before them, they will start a war right away. If, however, they see that there is a strong partner before them, this delays the beginning of war.<sup>9</sup>*

**Pyongyang improves air defense capability**

The North Korean Air Force (NKAFF) faced significant limitations in the mid-1960s, although it was modernizing rapidly. The Defense

---

***Between 1965 and 1969, the NKAF intensified training in skills that would threaten airborne intelligence collectors.***

---

Intelligence Agency (DIA) noted in 1967 that NKAF's "circumscribed night and foul-weather intercept capability" confined much of the force—notably the MiG-17 fleet—to a daytime, clear air mass intercept environment, although its MiG-19s and growing fleet of MiG-21s could intercept reconnaissance aircraft at other times.<sup>10</sup> The US Pacific Command (PACOM) judged that the NKAF relied heavily on a ground control intercept (GCI) system, so it assessed that the North Korean threat to PARPRO aircraft extended only out to 200 nm, rather than the aircraft's full combat radius.<sup>11</sup>

However, between 1965 and 1969, the NKAF intensified training in skills that would threaten airborne intelligence collectors. It developed intercept techniques against intruding—notably US reconnaissance—aircraft along its coasts and began conducting live launches of air-to-air missiles, the weapon used in the EC-121 shootdown.<sup>12</sup> Meeting with the National Security Council (NSC) *Pueblo* working group on 24 January 1968, Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the JCS, also said the North had practiced with surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) against targets flying at the same altitude as the A-12, CIA's precursor to the Air Force's SR-71.<sup>13</sup>

NSA highlighted these trends in warning messages sent before US Navy shipboard intelligence collection patrols sailed off the North Korean coast at least twice in the 1960s. A message sent in December 1967, just before USS *Pueblo*'s patrol, commented, "The NKAF has been extremely sensitive to peripheral reconnaissance flights in this area (east

coast of North Korea) since early 1965. . . . Internationally recognized boundaries as they relate to airborne activities are generally not honored by North Korea on the east coast of Korea."<sup>14</sup>

However, DIA concluded in an internal memo that "despite incipient indications to the contrary, actual North Korean air defense reactions to US reconnaissance flights in 1966 and 1967 were limited and restrained."<sup>15</sup> In a separate memo for the JCS Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC) produced in December 1967, DIA assessed that North Korean reactions to daytime electronic intelligence (ELINT) collection flights probably would be minimal, providing collection aircraft stay an unspecified "reasonable distance" from sovereign North Korean airspace, which Pyongyang then declared was 12 nm from the coastline.<sup>16</sup> The pace of North Korean fighter reactions had dropped in the latter part of 1967, with only five seen against the 172 reconnaissance missions flown between April and December 1967. This compared to the much higher rate of six fighter reactions to 35 missions between January and March 1967, according to another DIA memo.<sup>17</sup>

Appearing before Congress, BGen. Ralph Steakley, director of JRC, testified that since 1965 there had been only one instance of an NKAF fighter coming close to a US reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>18</sup> He commented on one incident in which a North Korean fighter approached "really close" to a US aircraft but evidently was flying at 25,000 feet, too low to intercept it.<sup>19</sup>

---

***P4M-1Q Mercator Attack***

---

Two North Korean MiG fighters attacked a P4M-1Q Mercator signals intelligence aircraft belonging to the Navy's Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One (VQ-1) flying at 7,000 feet, some 50 nm east of the DMZ on 16 June 1959, according to several sources including the unit's command history.<sup>20</sup> None of the sources suggest the aircraft received any warning before the attack. Rather, the MiGs approached and at 1315 local began their strafing runs. The Mercator turned to orient its tail cannon on the MiGs, but the gunner was wounded and the cannon damaged, according to a DOD press release.<sup>21</sup> The Mercator dived to approximately 50 feet above the water. After conducting six strafing runs, the MiGs probably ran low on fuel and broke off the engagement after repeatedly attacking the aircraft over another 20 nm. The Mercator sustained serious damage to engines, wings, and rudders. With two engines and the rudders shot away, the plane barely made it back to Japan for a safe landing at Miho Air Base.<sup>22</sup>

A lengthy and detailed CIA human intelligence report published about the NKAF in 1969 provides additional information about this incident. Although information about the report's provenance was redacted, it tells a story partially consistent with crew reports. The NKAF ordered two MiG-15s based at Wonsan to intercept the Mercator because it was flying on a track associated with US intelligence collection missions against the North Korean coast. The MiG pilots initially planned to attack the Mercator simultaneously from different sides but shifted to a sequential attack to avoid a mid-air

collision. The MiG pilots initially were flying at 8,000 meters (26,246 feet)—too high for the proposed intercept—and did not see their prey until they dove to a lower altitude. They intercepted the P4M-1Q between 70 to 80 km (approximately 43 to 49 nm) from offshore, and chased it out to some 150 km (93 nm) from the North Korean coast. The NCAF commander reprimanded the pilots for not downing the Mercator.<sup>23</sup>

### ***RB-47 Attack***

The second incident occurred on 27 April 1965, when two MiG-17s from Sondok, an east coast fighter base, attacked a USAF RB-47 flying over water some 40 nm east of the North Korean coast. The flight took place after the NCAF had for several days demonstrated growing edginess about foreign aircraft over the Sea of Japan, according to a CIA *President's Daily Brief* (PDB) article summarizing the incident and NSA reporting. The intercept was the fifth time in nine days that North Korean fighters had scrambled in response to reconnaissance aircraft offshore, according to the PDB.<sup>24</sup>

This time, however, the RB-47 crew also received a warning over HF radio that bogeys were airborne near Wonsan, and it briefly acquired a weak ELINT cut of a MiG air-intercept radar. However, the crew would not realize they were being attacked until cannon fire struck the aircraft. The MiGs approached from behind and below—the RB-47's blind spot—and made at least three firing passes in sequence.<sup>25</sup>

The RB-47 fired its tail cannon, released chaff, and dived from 27,000 to 14,000 feet to complicate

---

### ***Despite the severe damage, Lt. Col. "Matt" Mattison, the pilot, successfully landed the aircraft at Yokota Air Base, Japan, without incurring casualties.***

---

the attack.<sup>26</sup> Only two of six engines remained undamaged, and the RB-47 sustained a ruptured fuel tank, leading to a severe nose-heavy imbalance that would require a difficult no-flaps landing, according to US press reports. Despite the severe damage, Lt. Col. "Matt" Mattison, the pilot, successfully landed the aircraft at Yokota Air Base, Japan, without incurring casualties. The Air Force ultimately declared the RB-47 to be a constructive loss, i.e., not worth the cost of repair.<sup>27</sup>

### ***EC-121 Shootdown***

An NCAF MiG-21 ambushed the VQ-1 EC-121 SIGINT aircraft on 15 April while it was on a mission some 80 nm offshore. The fighter was one of two the North Koreans had relocated to a MiG-15/MiG-17 training base in northeastern North Korea the month before. In describing the incident in a telephone call to President Richard Nixon, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger said the North had deliberately planned to shoot down the EC-121. He added, "They were moving two MiG-21s, which would not signal anything in particular to us about their intentions."<sup>28</sup> The shootdown killed 31 personnel—to this day, the costliest operational disaster involving US SIGINT aircraft.

PACOM had approached the mission cautiously by adjusting the EC-121's flight track to reduce its vulnerability to attack, but a different interpretation of the evidence probably would have justified postponing the flight or at least providing fighter escort. Gen. Charles Bonesteel, the

commander of US Forces Korea, advised PACOM in April 1969 that in recent Military Armistice Commission meetings, "the North Koreans have been particularly vehement and vicious in warning UN forces about provocative actions."<sup>29</sup> USFK on 11 April warned, "aircrews should be especially alert and prepared to abort at the first indication of any North Korean reaction." PACOM responded with a message advising component commanders to exercise all caution during PARPRO operations near North Korea and raising the required standoff distance from the Korean coastline from 40 to 50 nm.

Theater intelligence collectors, however, had misinterpreted the initial deployment on 28 March of the two MiG-21s—the NCAF's most capable fighter—to the training base at Hoemun. The Joint SIGINT processing center on Okinawa on 30 March 1969 concluded that the NCAF had deployed the MiGs to facilitate fighter transition training because a MiG-21 transition training unit was located at another east coast base, Pukch'ang-ni, and could have deployed the MiG-21s to Hoemun as part of their training syllabus. The deployment put the MiG-21s at the base nearest the EC-121's collection orbit and positioned them to conduct a shootdown after flying only 80–90 nm and thus reducing the EC-121's warning time.

NSA's detailed study of the event, indicates that the MiG-21s launched to intercept the EC-121 at about 1330 local time as the EC-121 reached the extreme northern end of its orbit—the point at which it would reach its

---

***The EC-121 did not acknowledge warnings transmitted to it immediately before the shootdown, and the crew's actions in their final minutes are unknown.***

---

closest point of approach to Hoemun. One Fishbed flew a defensive patrol and approached no closer than 65 nm from the EC-121, while the other shot it down at approximately 1347 as it flew about 80 nm off the North Korean coast, and immediately returned to North Korean airspace.

The EC-121 did not acknowledge warnings transmitted to it immediately before the shootdown, and the crew's actions in their final minutes are unknown. The Seventh Fleet operations order called for aircrews in this situation to turn directly away from North Korean territory and prepare for defense against hostile attacks under certain warning conditions. A joint US Navy-Air Force team investigating the EC-121's wreckage concluded that the EC-121 sustained major structural damage from the detonation of a fragmenting warhead of one (or possibly two) air-to-air missiles.

Although there is no evidence that conclusively shows why Pyongyang attacked the EC-121, the CIA on 16 April judged that it was a deliberate act driven by Kim Il Sung's desire to offset his failed attempts to foment an armed struggle in South Korea and to demonstrate to the new Nixon administration that the North would not abandon its unconventional warfare campaign.<sup>30</sup> State Department analysts added that "it is probably more than coincidence that the downing occurred on Kim Il Sung's birthday," judging that the "most likely North Korean motivation, then, is self gratification and increased prestige for Kim Il Sung at the expense of the

United States following a plan based on Pyongyang's *Pueblo* experience."<sup>31</sup>

---

***SR-71 Blackbird Attack***

The North launched two SA-2 surface-to-air missiles (SAM) against an SR-71 from a site located on an island off the west coast of North Korea on 26 August 1981 after several weeks of growing tension between the two Koreas, according to CIA reporting on the incident and accounts from Blackbird aircrews. The CIA reported that several months before the shootdown the North had been particularly sensitive to activity near its southwest coastal area and had built a SAM site there, a target SR-71 crews had been tasked to collect against. The agency also noted other unusual activity, including an increase in the number of incidents involving North and South Korean fishing boats and a spike in ground force activity along the DMZ.<sup>32</sup>

The SR-71s began collecting ELINT cuts on the suspected SA-2 site in April 1981, according to interviews with participating SR-71 crews. The site was on an island in an estuary near the western end of the DMZ. While approaching the western side of Korea at Mach 3 and 77,000 feet on 26 August, the aircrew noted defensive system activity and the reconnaissance systems officer reported a probable launch. He spotted a contrail, and the pilot turned the aircraft slightly to the south to get away from the SA-2. The SA-2 missed the Blackbird by at least 2 nm and exploded harmlessly behind and

to the right of the aircraft at 80,000 feet.<sup>33</sup>

CIA later commented in an internal warning memo on 28 September 1981 that the meaning of the firing, its significance for future flights in the area, and for Pyongyang's posture against the United States and South Korea remained unclear but judged that the launch might have been a response to what Pyongyang viewed as a breach of its sovereignty or to demonstrate new determination to act against hostile intelligence collection activity. The memo warned that Pyongyang's attitude increased the possibility of additional hostile incidents, including the prospect of another firing on US reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>34</sup>

The incident angered President Ronald Reagan, and the United States made arrangements to re-fly the original track in October 1981, this time with the SR-71 accompanied by supporting aircraft ready to strike back if the Blackbird came under fire again.<sup>35</sup> Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci visited the SR-71 detachment in Okinawa in September and told its members that President Reagan would not tolerate a second such incident. Lt. Gen. Robert Mathis, the assistant vice chief of staff, advised the unit that it would fly four, special category, precisely timed, missions using the 26 August track. He explained that Wild Weasel aircraft would be poised to launch anti-radar, air-to-surface missiles against any offending SA-2 site within 60 seconds of another attack on an SR-71, according to Crickmore's account, but the missions did not provoke another launch.<sup>36</sup>



---

### **Observations and Lessons**

Numerous boards were convened to review lessons from the EC-121 shutdown. These had common themes; they evaluated the value of the missions, ascertained whether all the tracks were required, and eliminated low priority missions.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the team managing the PARPRO program derived a number of lessons in managing sensitive airborne collection, particularly during its high level of activity during heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula during the 1960s. Some of the lessons are explicitly identified in formerly classified message traffic; others may be inferred by observing the challenges such operations face. A few such observations—at least as they apply to the Cold War era—follow.

***PARPRO mission guidance changed frequently to reduce threats to collectors.*** JRC, DIA, and several other organizations routinely reviewed PARPRO missions and tweaked the rules of engagement to respond to North Korean behavior; adjustments would be made to mission parameters such as time of day, allowable closest points of approach to North Korea, and requirements for airstrip or airborne alerts, according to congressional testimony by DoD leaders, formerly classified DIA documents, and message traffic from JCS to subordinate commands.<sup>38</sup>

For two years after the RB-47 incident in April 1965, for example, the Strategic Air Command flew reconnaissance missions over the Sea of Japan only during darkness, according to General Wheeler's testimony before Congress in 1969. The NKAF demonstrated no hostile intent during this period. Consequently, the United

---

### **Numerous boards were convened to review lessons from the EC-121 shutdown.**

---

States resumed normal day and night missions over the sea in late 1967. Fighters escorted these missions for an unspecified period after the 1965 shutdown attempt, but the escorts stopped when flights were not challenged.<sup>39</sup>

Other actions taken at various times included imposing strip alerts to support aircraft flying near the DMZ, briefly requiring fighter escorts after the *Pueblo* seizure, imposing an 80-mile stand-off distance from North Korea, reducing the closest point of approach to 40 nm, and then raising it to 50 nm.<sup>40</sup> When MiG-21s reappeared at Hoemun in May 1971, PACOM moved the flight track for an impending PARPRO mission beyond the range of North Korean ground control radars, according to the NSA history.<sup>41</sup> After North Korea fired SA-2s at the SR-71 in August 1981, commanders readjusted the track for future such missions still farther south to move them away from the SA-2 threat.<sup>42</sup>

PACOM considered other procedural changes after the EC-121 shutdown but concluded it lacked enough land-based fighters in theater to provide four-ship fighter escort for each PARPRO mission. The command instead considered alternatives such as stationing a carrier strike group in the Sea of Japan indefinitely; reducing the number of PARPRO tracks near Korea to reduce exposure to the NKAF; decreasing from four to two the number of fighters that might be assigned to escort mission aircraft; using only aircraft on ground alert to protect reconnaissance aircraft flying south of the DMZ; and using barrier combat air patrols to protect a broad

area in which reconnaissance aircraft were operating rather than trying to escort each individual platform.<sup>43</sup>

***NKAF might get through.*** In reviewing the threat to PARPRO collectors in 1969, PACOM concluded that enough NKAF fighters making a determined effort might be able to shoot down a reconnaissance aircraft even if escorted by four fighters. The assessment stated:

*Neither fighter CAP protection nor fighter escort can assure the safety of the reconnaissance platform. If the enemy makes careful plans through observation of tracks and related operations and makes a concerted effort to destroy a reconnaissance aircraft, chances are good that he may succeed even though he may lose some of his force. The protection provided must be considered a deterrent rather than a positive shield.<sup>44</sup>*

***C3 shortfalls; C3 improvements.*** Investigations into the EC-121 shutdown revealed shortfalls in command, control, and communications (C3) in PACOM. These were particularly evident in faulty connections between, on the one hand, VQ-1, the EC-121's squadron, and USN-39, the SIGINT element directly supporting the squadron and, on the other hand, other SIGINT sites following the mission.<sup>45</sup> VQ-1 and USN-39 were inadvertently left off distribution for SIGINT message traffic warning of the MiG-21 activity, including a SPOT report sent at 1345 local highlighting North Korean reaction to the EC-121, which suggested an attack was occurring.

---

**Although some of the incidents discussed above occurred half a century ago, they are worth remembering because Pyongyang might still consider harassing, if not attacking, US aircraft in another crisis.**

---

Consequently, VQ-1 did not have an opportunity to request search and rescue (SAR) support for the EC-121 until after it received a lateral CRIT-IC (a top priority message) at 1458 local, when it immediately requested SAR support. As a result an SAR aircraft did not arrive until almost two hours after the shutdown.<sup>46</sup> The congressional subcommittee investigating the event concluded that VQ-1 “lost all effective operational control of the aircraft.” The subcommittee added, “When units monitoring the EC-121 directed warning messages to the aircraft, VQ-1 was never included as an addressee on any of the messages.”<sup>47</sup>

These shortfalls would spark theater and national interest in developing fusion centers capable of processing operational and intelligence information faster and more coherently before and during a crisis. The NSA history highlights the shutdown as one of the factors that contributed to the creation of NSA’s

National SIGINT Operation Center four years later.<sup>48</sup>

***More interest in SIGINT drones.***

The NSA history noted that the shutdown sparked community-wide interest in the use of unmanned collection platforms to reduce the risk of casualties associated with manned aircraft. The USAF soon began using drones and mini-manned aircraft (flight crews only) with palletized intercept receivers remotely tuned by operators at ground stations in high-risk areas. However, this drone program was phased out in 1975 due to cost and high loss rates in Vietnam.<sup>49</sup>

***Increased NSA involvement in PARPRO reviews.*** The EC-121 shutdown encouraged a more comprehensive NSA role in monitoring PARPRO flights, including those of ELINT collectors. In particular, the agency began to methodically evaluate the “take” from the missions and to more actively participate in monthly PARPRO planning sessions.<sup>50</sup>



**The author:** Richard A. Mobley is a longtime military analyst in CIA’s Directorate of Analysis.

---

***Still Watching***

Although some of the incidents discussed above occurred half a century ago, they are worth remembering because Pyongyang might still consider harassing, if not attacking, US aircraft in another crisis. On 4 March 2003, for example, a time when US policymakers would have focused on Iraq, two NKAF MiG-29s and two MiG-23s intercepted an RC-135S Cobra Ball aircraft approximately 150 nm off the Korean coast, according to a Pentagon spokesman. They accompanied it for 22 minutes and approached to within 50 to 400 feet of the aircraft at the same altitude. After the fighters turned away, the RC-135S aborted its mission and returned safely to Okinawa.<sup>51</sup>

North Korean media continues to refer to this and other incidents, such as the EC-121 shutdown, as demonstrations of military prowess, claiming, for example, to have “resolutely repelled” and “driven back” the RC-135.<sup>52</sup> The attitude betrayed by such North Korean commentary still bears watching.

## Endnotes

1. Office of Archives and History/Central Security Service, *The National Security Agency and the EC-121 Shootdown* (National Security Agency, 1989) (hereafter “NSA History”), 7. Available at <https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/cryptologic-histories/EC-121.pdf>.
2. Memorandum, “Mission Basis for Downed EC-121M Navy Aircraft,” attributed to Department of Defense and undated, US Declassified Documents Online. Source note 31 in the NSA History attributes this memo to the United States Intelligence Board and dates it 18 April 1969.
3. JCS, “Fact Book: EC-121 Shoot Down in Sea of Japan,” undated, Wheeler, “091 Korea (BP) EC-121 Shootdown,” RG 218, National Archives; House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969), 1675.
4. CINCPAC 220213Z April 1969, “Plan for Protection of Reconnaissance Aircraft in Korean Area,” in Wheeler Records, Box 31, RG 218, National Archives.
5. NSA History, 10; House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969); Keesing’s *Record of World Events*, “Shooting Down of US Reconnaissance Plane by North Koreans-Statement by Richard Nixon,” Volume 15, May 1969 (<https://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/1379-1969-05-KS-f-EYJ.pdf>).
6. NSA History, 10.
7. CIA Office of National Estimates, “Security Conditions in South Korea,” 23 June 1967 as cited in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1964-1968, Volume XXIX, 257-59.
8. Soviet Embassy to the DPRK, Record of Conversation between NG Sudarikov and Heo Dam, dated 16 April 1969, Woodrow Wilson Center ([digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org)).
9. Soviet Embassy to the DPRK, Record of Conversation between NG Sudarikov and Pak Seong-Cheol dated 16 April 1969, Woodrow Wilson Center ([digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134231](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134231)).
10. DIA memo for the JRC, “Possible North Korean Reactions to Daytime Peripheral Reconnaissance Flights,” 26 December 1967, DIA FOIA document 126545.
11. CINCPAC 220213Z April 1969, “Plan for Protection of Reconnaissance Aircraft in Korean Area,” in Wheeler Records, Box 31, RG 218, National Archives.
12. CIA, “The Pueblo Incident: Briefing Materials for Ambassador Ball’s Committee,” 5 February 1968, LBJ Presidential Library.
13. “Summary Minutes of Pueblo Group,” 24 January 1968 as cited in *FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIX*, 475.
14. House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969), 1654-55.
15. DIA Memo containing director’s statement summarizing DIA support to review of DOD monthly reconnaissance schedule, 20 March 1969, DIA FOIA document #126535.
16. DIA memo for the Joint Reconnaissance Center, “Possible North Korean Reactions to Daytime Peripheral Reconnaissance Flights,” 26 December 1967, DIA FOIA document #126545.
17. DIA memo on NKAF reactions to US reconnaissance activity, undated, DIA FOIA document #126540.
18. NSA History, 42.
19. Testimony by General Steakley, House Armed Service Committee, Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo, HASC 91-101, 1969 (hereafter HASC Hearings), 923.
20. Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One, “History of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One,” 1 November 1961 (VQ-1 History Files, Aviation Archives, Naval History and Heritage Command); NSA, “A Dangerous Business: The US Navy and National Reconnaissance during the Cold War,” 2004 ([https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/about/cryptologic-heritage/historical-figures-publications/publications/coldwar/dangerous\\_business.pdf](https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/about/cryptologic-heritage/historical-figures-publications/publications/coldwar/dangerous_business.pdf)); Robert L. Harrelson, History of VQ-1, “Events of 14, 16, and 17th of June 1959,” [www.vqassociation.org](http://www.vqassociation.org); “A Look Back at June, 16, 1959 Squadron P-4M Attacked by Communist Planes,” VQ Association Newsletter, Spring 2003 ([http://vqassociation.org/documents/VQ\\_Newsletter\\_Spring\\_2003-7.pdf](http://vqassociation.org/documents/VQ_Newsletter_Spring_2003-7.pdf)); Thomas Van Hare, “Intercepted,” 16 June 2013 in [www.fly.historicwings.com](http://www.fly.historicwings.com) (<http://fly.historicwings.com/2013/06/intercepted/>).
21. DOD News Release, 17 June 1959 (No. 710-59) (VQ-1 command history files, Aviation Archives, Naval History and Heritage Command).
22. Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One, “History of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One,” 1 November 1961 (VQ-1 History Files, Aviation Archives, Naval History and Heritage Command).
23. CIA, Intelligence Information Report, “The North Korean Air Force,” 15 November 1960, Document CIA-RDP-80T00246A056900170001-2 on [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov).
24. CIA, *President’s Daily Brief*, 28 April 1965, Document CIA-RDP79T00936A003600320001-2 on [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov); ; NSA History, 12; House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969), 1654-55.
25. Forrest L. Marion, “A Hot Day in a Cold War: an RB-47 versus MiG-17s,” *Air Power History*, Fall 2006 ([www.afhistory.org/air-power-history/2006-air-power-history-archive](http://www.afhistory.org/air-power-history/2006-air-power-history-archive)); Wolfgang Samuel, *I always Wanted to Fly: America’s Cold War Airmen*, 230-54.
26. Ibid.

27. Bruce M. Bailey, *We See All: A History of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing*; Marion, "A Hot Day in a Cold War"; Samuel, *I always Wanted to Fly*, 230–54.
28. Record of telecon Between President Nixon and Kissinger, 15 April 1969, *FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume XIX*, Part 1, 18.
29. Unless otherwise noted, the details of the attack are drawn from the redacted unclassified NSA History.
30. CIA *Current Intelligence Bulletin*, 16 April 1969, Document CIA-RDP79T00975A013500050001-6 on www.foia.cia.gov; also see NSA History, note 161 on page 53 for a summary of other theories about why Pyongyang downed the EC-121.
31. Footnote summarizing State Intelligence Note No. 274 cited in CIA document, "Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, 17 April 1969, *FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XIX*, Part 1, 32.
32. CIA, "East Asia Warning Assessment," 28 September 1981, Document CIA-RDP83B01027R000300050028-3 on www.foia.cia.gov; Paul Crickmore, *Lockheed SR-71 Operations in the Far East*, 77–78; CIA, "NIO Monthly Warning Reports-August 1981," 28 August 1981, Document CIA-RDP83B01027R000100090002-6 on www.foia.cia.gov.
33. Crickmore, *Lockheed SR-71 Operations in the Far East*, 77.
34. CIA, "NIO Monthly Warning Reports-August 1981," 28 August 1981, Document CIA-RDP83B01027R000100090002-6 on www.foia.cia.gov.
35. Crickmore, *Lockheed SR-71 Operations in the Far East*, 79.
36. *Ibid.*, 78–80.
37. CINCPAC 220213Z April 1969, "Plan for Protection of Reconnaissance Aircraft in Korean Area," in Wheeler Records, Box 31, RG 218, National Archives; NSA History, 41–48.
38. House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969); DIA Memo containing director's statement summarizing DIA support to review of DOD monthly reconnaissance schedule, 20 March 1969, DIA FOIA document #126535; CINCPAC 220213Z April 1969, "Plan for Protection of Reconnaissance Aircraft in Korean Area," in Wheeler Records, Box 31, RG 218, National Archives; JCS, "Fact Book: EC-121 Shoot Down in Sea of Japan," undated, Wheeler, "091 Korea (BP) EC-121 Shootdown," RG 218, National Archives (see attachments JCS 232309Z January 1968, JCS 021550Z July 98, and JCS 071821Z February 1969).
39. General Wheeler's testimony, HASC Hearings, 907, 919–20.
40. House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969), p. 1677; JCS, "Fact Book: EC-121 Shoot Down in Sea of Japan," undated, Wheeler, "091 Korea (BP) EC-121 Shootdown," RG 218, National Archives.
41. NSA History, 46.
42. Crickmore, *Lockheed SR-71 Operations in the Far East*, 78.
43. CINCPAC 220213Z April 1969, "Plan for Protection of Reconnaissance Aircraft in Korean Area," in Wheeler Records, Box 31, RG 218, National Archives.
44. *Ibid.*
45. NSA History, 21.
46. *Ibid.*, 23–24.
47. House Armed Services Committee, Special Subcommittee on the USS Pueblo and EC-121 Plane Incidents, 91-12 (1969), 1675.
48. NSA History, 47–48.
49. *Ibid.*, 44.
50. *Ibid.*, 46–47.
51. Eric Schmitt, "North Korea MiGs Intercept US Jet on Spying Mission," *New York Times*, 4 March 2003; Bradley Graham, "N. Korea Tails US Spy Plane," *Washington Post*, 4 March 2003.
52. Korean Central Broadcasting Station, "Kim Jong Un Inspects Air, Anti-Air Force Command," 3 May 2012; KCNA, "Great Feats Performed by KPA Air Force," 29 November 2017.



---

## ARGO Producer Chay Carter: Thinking about Film and the World of Intelligence

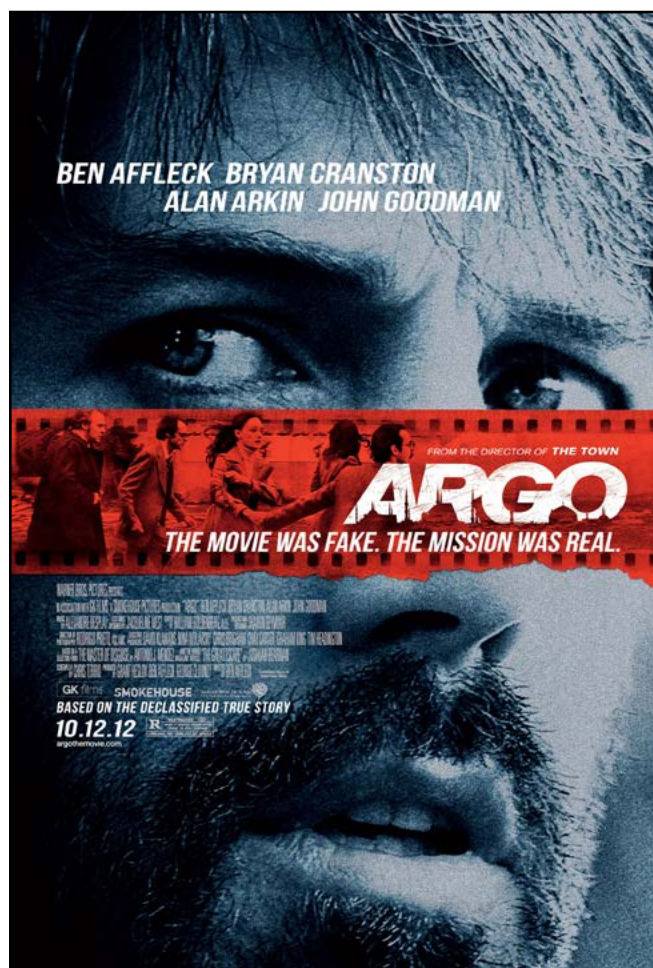
Interviewed by Peter Usowski and Sara Lichterman

---

*This article is dedicated to the memory of  
Tony Mendez, 1940–2019.*

---

**“Believe it or not, it took almost  
13 years to get ARGO made.”**



Poster © Picture Lux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

*Peter S. Usowski, Director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence, and Sara Lichterman of CIA's Office of Public Affairs interviewed Ms. Carter on 20 September 2018. Ms. Carter is one of the executive producers of the movie ARGO, which portrays the story of Anthony Mendez's successful effort to exfiltrate six members of the US embassy who avoided being taken during the Iranian seizure of the embassy in November 1979. The article is an adaptation of the interview, edited for clarity and brevity.*

Questions have all been italicized.

### ***The Origins of ARGO***

Thinking about *ARGO* actually started a long time before Ben [Affleck] and I came on board as part of the movie-making team. Believe it or not, it took almost 13 years to get that movie made. Its inception was an unclassified article that appeared in *Studies in Intelligence* in 1998.<sup>a</sup> David Klawans, the executive producer of *ARGO*—who is brilliant at finding articles and ideas—found that article, thought it was interesting, and went through whatever process it was to grab it up.

He initially tried to start selling the story, taking it around Hollywood to the studios and whatnot, which is very typical here. They say, “Oh, well, we want . . . You need more to it, attach more, do more.” So, he came up with a way: He talked to a friend of his, Joshua (“Josh”) Bearman, a journalist and screenwriter and said, “Josh, let’s use your journalistic capabilities.” And they wrote an article for *Wired* magazine.<sup>b</sup>

---

a. Antonio Mendez, “CIA Goes Hollywood: A Classic Case of Deception,” *Studies in Intelligence* 42, no. 2 (June 1998)

b. Joshua Bearman, “The Great Escape,” *Wired*, April 2007 at <https://www.wired.com/2007/04/feat-cia/>

---

The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in this article should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the United States government.

---

**“This is the best script I think we have that fits your wheelhouse. It is kind of what you like, the things that you gravitate toward.”** — Jeff Robinov (Warner Brothers) to Ben Affleck.

---

And so, that gave Hollywood a piece of source material. The *Wired* article was great. So with David’s finding the original *Studies* piece in 1998, getting Joshua on board in 2005, and the *Wired* article coming out in 2007, there was a lot of inactive time. In 2007 when the *Wired* article came out, a small bidding war broke out in Hollywood. That’s when our partners in the film, George Clooney and Grant Heslov with Smokehouse Pictures, acquired the article and optioned it.

Clooney and Heslove had their deal with Warner Brothers—where Ben [Affleck] and I also were. They then found a screen writer, Chris Terrio, who you guys may know. He wrote the screenplay; he was kind of unknown then. Nina Wolarski, who worked for Warner Brothers, developed the script with him. They took a lot of research that Joshua had done.

We came into the picture about 2009 because we were shooting *The Town* for Warner Brothers. Smokehouse, George [Clooney] and Grant [Heslov] had just moved to Sony. But they still had the *ARGO* project at Warner Brothers because they had developed it there. So, when we finished *The Town*, Ben [Affleck] said to them, “We’re looking for your best script. We want your best story, the best story that you’ve got out there.”

You would think coming from a huge studio like Warner Brothers which does big tent-pole type films and a variety of others, but you wouldn’t think immediately that *ARGO* might be the best they’d think about. But Jeff Robinov, who was

running Warner Brothers at the time told Ben [Affleck], “This is the best script I think we have that fits your wheelhouse. It is kind of what you like, the things that you gravitate toward.”

As soon as we read it, pretty much immediately, things started fast-tracking. So, we read it in 2009 or 2010, and we were shooting in 2011. And then, of course, the film came out in 2012. So, a 13-year process to make that film, which seems like a lot. But it’s not that unheard of. You guys probably work a lot quicker—intelligence. [Laughter.]

*Q: What was it about the Wired article, in comparison with the original Studies article, that attracted people to the concept?*

You know, quite honestly, that’s a great question. Because, again, it was so early in the process, 1998 until 2010–2011 when we started actually shooting—in that time I think none of us ever saw the original article.

So, we read the *Wired* article and then the script. And those were the two things. And truly it was the script that we focused on at that piece of the process. It’s what we were given to make the decision. I wish I had seen the article because that would be more specific to you guys. I’m guessing the *Wired* article had a little more drama to it, added pieces.

---

### **How Ideas Turn to Film**

CC: Typically studios here want source material. So, one might think, “Oh, it’s Hollywood. They’re cre-

ative people. These things are made up.” They are made up, but [studios] want backup now. They want branded content. If it’s a book, if it’s an article—and that goes also for your journal, *Studies*—if it’s something that they could draw from, “Oh, it’s here. Okay. Great.” They’re more apt to consider taking a look at and making something of such material because they know it has some kind of audience.

And so, specifically to you guys, I was so fascinated that you probably have so many incredible stories there about the agency, about agents, about missions that are made unclassified as time goes by. Those stories are super valuable, I think, to producers like me or other content creators.

### **Factors Behind Decisions to Produce**

Decisionmaking is a very specific, subjective process. It’s very personal. So, it really depends on the genre, the filmmaker, and who’s driving the process. For myself, it’s what I gravitate toward; I tend to love true stories. I have developed five over the past few years in that vein; they all some kind of message. You want it to be entertaining. But I think if you see certain directors, certain producers, certain types continue, usually, to direct the same types of films. It’s a very personal type of thing.

In the case of *ARGO*, it was absolutely Ben Affleck who drove the decisionmaking. Ben [Affleck] was looking for his next project. And Warner’s was happy with the work we had done with them on *The Town*.

*Q: We’re talking about a more serious type of spy or espionage movie. What elements make one story more compelling than another in*

terms of the way Hollywood can use it?

I think it's specific to the kind of film, and I think it's really in the details. It's also very societal and related to the [social] climate, the current climate. We're supposed to be a business of creators. And in a way, we're part of media, right? We're supposed to lead in that sense and put up different stories and trends and see what the public likes. I think in the last five, 10 years—you've seen a big change in Hollywood, where they've gone away from making more serious films, for which I think there is a great market. Our audiences are smart. I think they also want variety. But I think we're coming around, but for a while, it's been all super hero films and big tent poles and whatnot.

So, I think the elements that are attractive in a serious drama or spy type thing, are truth and details. Viewers want true stories. They want something that lets them peek behind a curtain and see what they haven't really seen before.

So, [in your world] I guess nothing is really "new new," but every mission, I would gather, every day is a little different. And if there are things in your vault that you can share and you're allowed to share certain details, that's going to be more enticing to any filmmaker and I think any kind of distributor/financier or studio.

*Q: What other research was done to help craft the story line for the whole movie?*

Screen writer Chris Terrio actually won the Academy Award that year for *ARGO*, and Josh Bearman already had a treasure trove of research he

---

**"Hi. This is Chay Carter. I'm the producer of a film about *ARGO*. We're doing this."** — Carter telephoning former hostages.

---

had done. Tony (Antonio J.) Mendez and his wife Jonna were incredibly instrumental. He was our main resource from the very beginning.

And then there were the six hostages. Tony gave me a couple emails and a phone number. [There had been a reunion of the group as the film concept was being considered.] I literally just picked up the phone or emailed and reached out to each and every one of them. "Hi. This is Chay Carter. I'm the producer of a film about *ARGO*. We're doing this." That was really important because we started to build a relationship with them. We were trying to let them know, out of respect and courtesy, that we're making this film about their lives, and we know it's personal. It's something I'm sure that was intense for them, intense and difficult. So, you want them to be comfortable and, out of respect, tell them.

But we also really wanted to mine for details. So, "Can you send us pictures of you back then? What type of stuff did you like to wear?" Then you get a sense for their personalities and such. And those are things that you can pass along to the actors, right? So, we had a researcher on the project with us, Max [Daly]. And all he did was to research this project and the people. And he created a dossier for each of the main characters, each of the real people. We shared those with the heads of our departments, and we shared those with the actors as well, so that they could really get into it.

As we approached production, we rented a house for a week—one of the locations we were going to shoot

the six in what was supposed to be the interior of the home in Tehran, the ambassador's place. We made the actors stay there for a week together. And we dressed the whole place only with '70s stuff. They weren't allowed to use their phones. Can you imagine six actors, no phones, no this or that. They were there with each other for five days, close to five days. That's it—70's looking TV (television), 70's publications. Everything was to get them in the moment and know what it felt like to be smashed in there.

### **Legal Concerns**

And so you know, in making this film, there was a lot of legal stuff we had to go through because the film was about true people. We needed to know that they were okay with us using their likenesses, their names, and the same even with public figures.

At one point we were getting close to shooting, and one former hostage had not yet responded to our efforts to get his approval. Warner Brothers studio kept saying, "Like you can't [use that person's name] . . . You're going to have to shoot alternates. Shoot it as you're shooting it, and then call him something else. . . . What if you don't get him?" What you want to do with all this research is to be authentic and take in all the details, and it's a fine line, right? You're covering the legal, but you're also depicting real people. So, you want to be respectful of that. And if you try to trick an audience, and you only show them half the truth—and they know because people are very savvy these days—I think you lose them.

**And so, we felt—given the way the story came to us—to tell it from Tony’s perspective, but everyone’s involved. The ambassador had told his story. . . . But Tony couldn’t because the story was classified for a very long time.**

---

*Q: Did you speak with any of the Canadians who were involved?*

We did. We reached out to the ambassador a little bit after the hostages. We let him know that it was happening, and he got involved. There’s an interview of him on the DVD of the movie.

**How a “perspective” is chosen**

This brings up a question of yours. How do we choose what perspective to take when one has many choices. The ambassador had told his story in a book, and he had been on tour and could speak. Tony couldn’t because the story was classified for a very long time.

And so, we felt—given the way the story came to us—to tell it from Tony’s perspective, but everyone’s involved. Obviously, the Canadian ambassador to Iran, Kenneth Taylor and his wife were incredibly instrumental. And other people were as well, but Taylor’s story’s been out there already. I think we depicted him well. But this was a story we wanted to tell from Tony’s perspective, and that’s why it came to be that way.

*Q: How was CIA helpful in the course of your research in developing the accuracy of what you were trying to portray?*

The most incredible thing that you guys did—and we were humbled, shocked, like little kids, super excited—was to allow us to shoot at CIA Headquarters. We had heard that not many people are allowed to shoot at

Headquarters and so, we were super thrilled.

Doing so was a bit of challenge, but we wanted to be authentic. We were able to take photos, just for stills use in certain unrestricted areas. It was incredibly helpful. And it is good now to know that you [CIA] have an office [in Public Affairs] willing to be open and talk to filmmakers and content creators. I think to get that message out would be amazing because you’re going to attract the right people. The people who want to do the research and depict the CIA and Intelligence Community properly. But I think there is a slight element of not—not full fear, but like you guys are still . . . it’s still the CIA, right?

But I do think the most important thing is to know that you guys are there, that you have stories, and that you’re willing to share, and you’re

proud. So, if can share details and information, you’re going to have the best stuff. I think some might wonder that you might only give them certain pieces, and they’re going to want more. That might be a hurdle get over with content creators because they like freedom, full freedom, and obviously if you have to stick with the true story, there are going to be more limitations. So, again, it’s really dependent on the filmmaker’s perspective and personality.

*Q: How do you make those decisions of historical accuracy versus taking liberties to be entertaining?*

Historically accurate is the way you want it at every level. Every department—and we work with some of the best department heads and crew members—helped create the vision. As the research is coming in, they are constantly coming in and out of my office and Ben’s office with results of their own research. For example, “We found out that they didn’t make this color at that time.” Or there is



Ben Affleck as Tony Mendez en route to a critical meeting at CIA Headquarters.  
Image © AF archive/Alamy Stock Photo



something else. So, we want to be as accurate as we can be.

And Tony helped a lot. It was crazy and amazing. We're asking, "Do you have photos of you at the . . ." "Oh, sure, I have photos." "Do you remember what you wore?" "Not only do I remember what I wore, but I still have the jacket in my closet, and the pants, too." And he says, "I'll send it out to you." So, he did. We took it, and our wardrobe department head and a costume designer made a replica of it. He'd found the same type of fabric, color, everything, buttons, and whatnot, and made it to fit Ben [Affleck]'s character.

You're creating a world; this one happened to be a real world. Every element that you can in every department, right, from the production design and the set decoration. What did the room look like? We wanted to know, wanted photos. What did the office look like? Do you know what the couch looked like? The goal is to replicate those pieces based on a true story in a world that existed.

At the end of the film, you can see the side-by-side images of actors and hostages. Those didn't just happen by happenstance. Those happened through research and studying down to the smallest detail, down to how people spoke and the badges they carried.

That effort is driven by the director and the producers saying, "We want it to be as accurate as possible." Time and cost are also factors. And do we have the passion? We were fortunate that everyone on the team from the get-go knew the mantra was "This is a true story. This is authentic, authentic, authentic. This is how we will do it."

### ***Conveying the Intensity of the Moment***

Now, you still need it to be entertaining. So, the final scene—the plane chase—that didn't happen of course. In my own travels, I'm nervous if I'm running late to the airport: "Oh, I got to get there!" or "I hope I don't get cut off on the parkway!" or "I can't miss the tram!" or whatever. There is already a level of tension there.

But can you imagine posing as someone else, trying to get out of a country where you know things are going down. The six weren't being chased like that but it's not interesting if they are just sitting on the plane ready to go, and maybe all of a sudden a crew member comes on the speaker and says, "We have some mechanical difficulties with the plane. So, we're going to have to wait." I mean, we can't ask an audience to sit and wait.

Well, what could we do? Okay, we know the Iranians are on their heels. Our six are nervous; they're trying to get out. They could make a mistake at any moment. So, that's intense, but we have to give the audience a little Hollywood magic, a little bit of the chase to increase the tension within the audience. So, that was dramatic

license, a little extra embellishment. And I think that that's okay. We've never lied about it. We always explain that it adds to the tension and the relief when they get airborne and are told, "You've cleared Iranian airspace." It was very emotional, like incredible. So, those are the types of things that we would change; not major points.

### ***The Challenge of Depicting Intelligence Work***

We depend a lot on production design—how does an office look? How do you shoot it? It's a lot more than just staring at papers. So we made sure we had an incredible set with a ton of elements. For example, there is the office scene (see below) in which Bryan Cranston (as Jack O'Donnell, Tony's boss) is visiting officers at their desks and you see the scope the office—the mounds of paperwork on the desks, all the people involved, ashtrays full of cigarette butts. It was every little detail, the lighting, and how they chose to shoot it adds to the intensity. And at the end of the day, it is the performance really. Bryan Cranston was incredible in that role



Tension mounts as the hostages face inspections of their falsified passports.  
Image © Picture Lux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

and added to it. So, you have to cast properly.<sup>a</sup>

*Q: How, in a two-hour or so movie, do you take the work of a lot of people—dozens and maybe hundreds of people—and winnow it down to just two, three, four, or five principal characters? What's the process you go through to do that while staying true to the story?*

In the film *Zero Dark Thirty*, Jessica Chastain's character certainly was the star, and she drove it from her perspective. But you did see the military groups around her, supporting characters but still important. You saw other agents in the office, the ones she had to partner with and go up against. Every mission has a chain of command, right? So, there has to be someone driving the mission, and

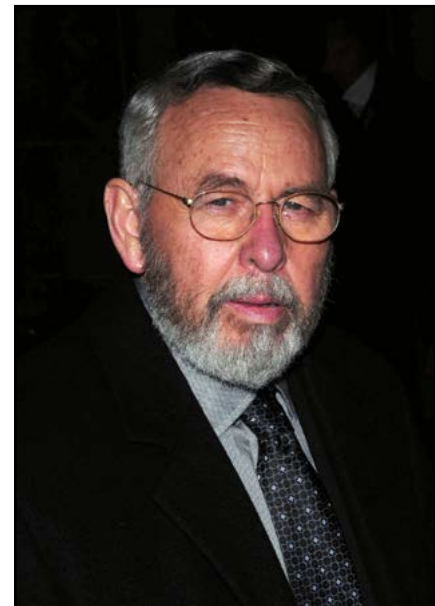
thus driving the story's perspective. I think that result naturally comes with the creative process; you have to pick someone.

There are other ways this could be done, but it is really about the story. In this story we could have done it from Ambassador Taylor's perspective; then it would have been wildly different. Tony would have been a secondary or tertiary character. The six probably would have been about the same, maybe slightly more prominent. But everything would have started with the Canadian ambassador. It's just a choice of filmmakers and what perspective they want to tell it from.

***Tony Mendez's Consulting Role***

*Q: Were there any parts of the story that deviated from Tony's recommendations? And if there were, what were the reasons?*

You know, that's a really good question. We've had that. We didn't really have that with Tony. I will say



Tony Mendez in 2013. Tony passed away on 19 January 2019. The *Washington Post* obituary by Harrison Smith described his profession as "geopolitical theater."<sup>a</sup> Photo © WENN Rights Ltd/Alamy Stock

---

he was really incredible with Jonna [Mendez]. And honestly, as I said, they were always a gift. Do you have photos of what you wore then? "I don't just have photos. I actually have the clothes." He was amazing, and then he would ask questions. Or, are you going to do this? But he was always, "I know you guys know what you're doing. You're asking all the right questions. You clearly care about the details. You guys are good at this. This is your baby and I trust you."

When we were first talking to the six, for instance, they didn't have that longevity and trust with us. Tony's had already been built by David [Klawns] and Josh and then George [Clooney], Grant [Heslov], and Nina [Wolarski] and Chris [Terrio], the

<sup>a</sup> Obituaries of Tony Mendez appeared in the *Washington Post* (19 January 2019) and *The New York Times* (22 January 2019).

a. For Bryan Cranston's take on playing a senior CIA officer and the making of the film see HitFix, 11 October 2012 interview on youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oV-j9yCMXlo>).



Bryan Cranston (as Jack O'Donnell, Tony's boss) in an office visit. Image © Picture Lux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

---

writer. And so with the six, it was different. When I called, cold called, “Hi. This is” me and blah-blah-blah. That took a little while to get them on board and build the trust. They were all wonderful, I have to say—really, really wonderful—but it took them a while.

And throughout the process, I had an open line at all times and listened to their objections or wishes to be treated differently or to play larger roles. That helps a lot. But I think it’s always human nature for people to want more. They want to be able to say, “Oh, if you’re using me and my character in there. . . .” It’s a very delicate dance to say, “We will be respectful. But this is also a movie or a TV show and there’s just going to be a little bit” so you’re preparing the real people for that I think.

*Q: Was there anything about your original conception that you wanted to include in the film but you didn’t and what were the reasons?*

In the original script and shooting of the film we had a story line about Tony’s personal and home life, because we thought it was important to depict not only the mission but the lifestyle of a CIA operative and how that affects and plays into personal life. You know, Tony had a wife with young child who’s at home and he can’t always tell them what’s going on. You don’t know when you’re going to see them, all those things. We thought it was important to do that because it was something that Tony and Jonna had explained. So, we had a number of scenes—Taylor Schilling played Jonna—and there was this lovely little boy. I think we had three or four scenes, full scenes, that we completely took out in post-produc-

---

***It’s very rare when the stars truly align. Everybody who worked on ARGO had the same passion and vision: to be authentic, to tell a great story with as many facts as possible, to be incredibly detail-oriented, to be very respectful of the real people who were involved and create this at the highest level with integrity.***

---

tion because we thought that while they were heartfelt and beautiful, they detracted from the story line and the force that would keep people interested. The scenes interrupted the main story, and the transitions felt jarring.

So, we made the decision in post-production, which is another difficult thing to do. First, we told Jonna, and she was fine—again, wonderful, laughing—and we then told our actress that she’s no longer in the movie. That’s tough, but it happens.

*Q: If you had to do this all over from the beginning, is there anything you would have done differently?*

On every movie I’ve worked on, whether it was as an assistant, as a producer, or whatever, I could sit for hours and be like, “Oh, my God!” I can barely watch some of them! I might think, “We should have never done it so dark. We shouldn’t have had so much profanity here. Oh, my God! This scene is really not well developed.” So, many different things. But truly I wouldn’t have done anything differently with this movie.

Because it’s very rare when the stars truly align, and everybody who worked on it from the PAs (production assistants) to interns in post-production to everyone who starred had the same passion and vision: to be authentic, to tell a great story with as many facts as possible, to be incredibly detail-oriented, to be very respectful of the real people who

were involved and create this at the highest level with integrity. And I mean that from the actors who took it super, super seriously every single day to every person on the crew. That creates a certain type of magic. And I do believe that we had that in this case.

Things that I wish for? I honestly wish we had gotten involved sooner. I wish I had met Tony sooner. I wish I had known the six longer than I had. I wish we had spent even more time with the ambassador, and I wish we had known John Chambers when he was still alive.<sup>a</sup> And I wish we had more time to make it, even though we didn’t.

### ***Reflections on Other Intelligence-related Films***

I appreciate films on different levels. I do like *Zero Dark Thirty* because I think it feels more gritty; told from the Jessica Chastain character’s point of view, it felt more realistic to me. There wasn’t that sort of glossy glamour that you tend to see on some other spy, espionage-type films that I’m not that into. You look at something like *Atomic Blonde*, with Charlize Theron. That came out last year. And truth, I love Theron, and the reason I wanted to watch that movie was

---

a. John Chambers was the Hollywood makeup genius who created and ran the studio front of the *ARGO* filmmakers. He would receive a medal from CIA for his help. He died in 2001. (<https://historyrat.wordpress.com/2012/11/04/john-chambers-studio-6/>)

---

***But the other big piece—and I mean this with the greatest of respect—is that obviously what you guys do every day is real world and it has real consequences.***

---

because she's an awesome, female ass-kicking agent, right? The style was incredible. And the effects! But did I think it was a real great depiction of the CIA or the spy industry? Absolutely not! And everyone could tell that because you don't have a six-foot gorgeous blonde decked out in Dior, trying to be a spy.

I like *Ronin*. I thought *Ronin* was really cool, again, because it was a little more gritty. It felt more real. The action of it was incredible in the drive sequences. I do like the Bond films, and I like the *Mission Impossible* films. Those are huge, huge, huge audience attractors, right? It's because people are seeing something that feels and is almost impossible.

And then there is the *Bourne Identity*, because to me it seems much more human and much more of what you'd think an agent probably has to be when he is one of the best. But he starts out with a handicap, right? He's got amnesia. So, how do you have an agent who's supposed to be in the intelligence business? He knows how to fight. But he has got amnesia, and then through the course of things he gets over it. So, a little more realistic than Bond and *Mission Impossible*. But still probably less than a *Zero Dark Thirty* or a *Ronin*-type.

*Q: After working on this film, how did your understanding of the intelligence business change, or did it change?*

CC: It's little nerve wracking working on a CIA story in a sense because it's a very highly respected agency, and the way that it's been

depicted through time—good or bad, true or not—as a place to be a little fearful of. So, I'm obviously not afraid of you guys. Everyone's just wonderful, normal. It's impressive but normal. So, that's one little piece of it.<sup>a</sup>

But the other big piece—and I mean this with the greatest of respect—is that obviously what you guys do every day is real world and it has real consequences. And this is seen in *ARGO*. It changes lives, it changes countries, it changes everything, right? What we do is for the most part entertainment, right? Hopefully informing, educating, whatever, but it's entertaining. We're not making or breaking anybody's life.

So, that's very different, but what did surprise me was that Hollywood and the CIA are not that different if you think about it. What we do, what we both do in a sense, is very covert, right? So, you have a mission. We have a movie. We don't talk about it. There are levels of classification. So, who knows what in intelligence is on a need-to-know basis. The same thing when you make a movie. It's need to know; there are levels of classification; who delivers what; and then there are very specific roles for very specific individuals. You try to compile the story and gather information. It's very specialized. And most important, this person does this job and that job only and talks to this

---

a. In his youtube interview, Cranston said the first thing he had to deal with in preparing to play the senior CIA officer was to "remove the aura" of the agency and recognize individuals as they were.

person but not that person. And then it's managed somehow, and it has to be done in a certain amount of time in a very covert way.

For us, it's much the same thing. We find the best person for the job, and they have to execute at the highest level and work with the others, because if one little piece doesn't happen, we can miss an entire shot. So, every person, every piece, every moment, every kind of handoff, whatever, is incredibly important. I know that's kind of dumbing it all down. But that was interesting to me because regardless of all the technology that we have, it's still a human-based business.

We're like the weird circus. We pop the tents up literally. One day we're in a location, and it looks like a little world. And then by the end of the day it's gone; hopefully there's not a scrap left behind. Not that different from what I gather you guys do, right? You're here today, gone tomorrow, but things are happening. And so, it's all done by people. But you have to work together, whether you like the person or not. It's all about the mission, and for us, it's all about the vehicle of the film, which is our mission. So, I thought that was interesting. We have a lot more similarities than differences, except you guys do important things and we play all day.

*Q: Would you do another movie about the intelligence business?*

CC: Oh, my God! In a second. In a second, absolutely. And, again, I would want to do it right, with the pieces that people are going to want to see, a detailed peek behind the curtain—the things that are going to be enticing to actors, production heads,

a filmmaker, director-type, other producers, a studio, or financiers.

*Q: I ask this final question because the Center for the Study of Intelligence and Studies in Intelligence—indeed the Intelligence Community—have a mission to help the public better understand the intelligence business and to know that their money's being invested in a worthwhile way. Before you went into making ARGO, what would you say were your most important sources for understanding the intelligence business?*

For us, we were very fortunate that we were doing a film about real, still living people who were very eloquent in sharing the details. As a producer, I did a very—a large amount of research, but mine was specific to getting people involved, especially the six. I think your question would be a better one for Max [Daly], our researcher. He really dug in.

But so much in research will depend on the drive behind the person doing the research. Are they trying to depict something in its true light—which is probably rare? Are they looking at it with a more sinister

---

***The ARGO experience showed me impressive details of what your community does and what human beings are capable of on the intelligence side.***

---

view? Do they want to look at it very positively? It's all in the vision that's taken and then how it will be backed up with research. So, what types of movies are you going to watch? What types of articles and what sources are you going to seek out? Still, knowing that the agency has an office serving as a resource for filmmakers, I think you'll have a lot of people calling and trying to utilize that.

*Q: Was there anything you wish we had asked you about?*

I would like to share the feeling of our experience in entering CIA Headquarters on the day of our shoot there. I was surprised to learn that you couldn't have your phones in the building. And, of course, everybody in the crew is feeling naked. So, we're in the front getting ready, and we're all excited and a little nervous. I think security allowed us to have two or three i-Pads because sometimes we have to check the script or some detail. But no phones. We were getting ready to shoot, and all of sudden, an officer comes over calling

out, "Wait! Wait! Wait! Someone's got a phone on!" We're like, "That's unbelievable!" And then you're embarrassed. Then it happened again with an Apple. So, then we're like, "Oh, my God! Now we're in trouble with the CIA."

Things like that—things you expect, but you don't expect—were surprising and exciting, even though we knew what you guys do. When you can get adults to feel like little kids in your presence and in your space, that's very powerful. And that's what I think I would like to say. I would do something about the Intelligence Community again and again, because it's something that we haven't seen that much of. And we certainly haven't seen that much of the real stuff. That gets people excited. It allows people's imagination and expands their vision and thoughts about what actually is out there and what it all entails. The *ARGO* experience showed me impressive details of what your community does and what human beings are capable of on the intelligence side.



***The interviewers:*** Peter Usowski is the Director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence and Chairman of the Editorial Board of Studies in Intelligence. Sara Lichterman serves on the staff of CIA's Office of Public Affairs.



## ***Intelligence in Public Media***

---

### ***Churchill: Walking with Destiny***

Andrew Roberts (Viking, 2018), 1105 pp., 32 unnumbered plates, illustrations, maps, genealogical table, bibliography and index.

### ***Reviewed by Thomas G. Coffey***

---

This is a great book about a great man, making it a worthy addition to already well-stocked shelves on its subject. Andrew Roberts, a bestselling author of books on World War II and Napoleon, brings new material to this biography—King George VI’s notes on his meetings with Churchill, Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky’s diary, and reports of War Cabinet meetings. What really makes this book stand out is how well the author tells this tale. Roberts has a knack for correcting in a wry way many of Churchill’s exaggerations and, in some cases, outright lies. His understated sense of humor infuses the narrative, making this 1100-page celebration of Churchill feel much lighter.

The title suggests hindsight guided the biographer, but Churchill saw himself as a man of destiny. As a young man, he regarded life’s experiences as grooming him to be the savior of the British Empire. (2) These experiences, from 1895 to 1955, were sweeping: As a cavalryman and reporter, Churchill saw action in Cuba, India, Sudan, and South Africa. After election to Parliament, Churchill served in the following governmental capacities: undersecretary of state for the colonies, president of the Board of Trade, home secretary, first lord of the admiralty during World War I, a lieutenant colonel in France, minister of munitions, secretary of war, colonial secretary, chancellor of the exchequer, and prime minister when Britain, for a period alone, confronted Nazi Germany during WWII. He even served another term as prime minister from 1951 to 1955.

Churchill published 43 book-length works in 72 volumes and won the Nobel Prize for Literature. It is hard to believe one man lived such a momentous life and that there could be so many stops on the way to reaching one’s destiny. Roberts makes clear that reaching this destiny took time—Churchill was 66 when he became prime minister—in part because his subject habitually showed off and basked in clever takedowns of his opponents, who never forgot and who found ways to pay him back. (98)

Despite having a critical eye, Roberts clearly gets a kick out of his subject and sprinkles the narrative with some of Churchill’s great zingers. When news broke that

former prime minister and Nazi appeaser Stanley Baldwin’s family business was bombed during the Blitz—the 1940–41 German bombing campaign—Churchill cracked “that was very ungrateful of them.” (570) When a guest refused an offer of alcohol, opting instead for water because “lions drink it,” Churchill replied “asses drink it, too.” Roberts aptly observed that, “as a drinker, smoker and carnivore, outliving (he lived to be 91 years old) teetotalers and vegetarians never failed to give Churchill immense satisfaction.” (953)

Churchill’s wit often was cutting, as when he started referring to his first chief of the General Imperial Staff, Sir John Dill, as “Dilly-Dally,” for his cautiousness in being “over-impressed with the might of Germany.” (689) On being informed that General Montgomery made his staff—and presumably himself—go on regular seven-mile runs, Churchill could not see the point of it: “The only exception might be the Italian army, where a general might find it useful to be a good runner.” (571) In recalling such rejoinders, Roberts has added color and sharpened the picture of Churchill’s propensity to make fun of others.

In an unusual touch for a “great man of history” book, Roberts gives a nod to the role of luck and calls attention to how even Churchill’s faults helped him reach his destiny. “Churchill was amazingly lucky, even in his defeats.” (975) Three consecutive parliamentary election losses in the 1920s allowed him to change from the Liberal to the Conservative Party, which in turn shunned him in the 1930s. These wilderness years in which Churchill was excluded from positions in two governments saved him from being tainted as a fellow appeaser and afforded him room to speak his mind about the Nazi threat. His zeal, obliviousness to others, and overall emotional character made him the right man to take on Hitler. “Churchill’s belief that the British were superior to every other nation was undoubtedly one of unquestioning prejudice, but did not leave him hesitating in 1940 in the way the crisis had left others skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved.” (970) The arguably rational, short-term, response to Hitler of a negotiated peace—on likely fair

---

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

---

terms, in Robert's view—was revolting to Churchill and his historical sense of Britain's greatness. "Nations which went down fighting rose again, but those which tamely surrendered were finished." (547)

Churchill was determined to go down fighting his way. He reasserted civilian control over military affairs to avoid the uncontested policies that resulted in stalemate and the tremendous loss of life in WW I. "There will be no more Kitchener's, Fishers, or Haigs"—secretary of state for war, first sea lord (of the Admiralty), and commander of the British Expeditionary Force. (524) Having observed Haig and his advisers, Churchill warned against the temptation to tell a chief in great position "the things he most likes to hear. One of the commonest explanations for mistaken policy." (518) This suggestion of open-mindedness sure could have fooled Churchill's subordinates, who were often driven to distraction by the prime minister's obstinacy. Dill's successor, General Alan Brooke noted, "every month of working with Churchill takes a year off my life . . . he is a peevish, temperamental prima donna of a Prime Minister." (469)

As a man of action suspicious of military advice, Churchill had a habit of "running with the intelligence," especially in the early stages of WW II, when it was important to show British defiance in the face of terrible odds. He put much stock in Ultra decrypts of communications within the German commands. Even though Ultra messages sent to operational headquarters would achieve a cumulative wartime total of 100,000, they nevertheless were snapshots in time and risked giving false senses of certainty about situations or policy directions.<sup>a</sup> Not all military communications of significance were intercepted and translated. As late in the war as November 1944, 77 percent of Luftwaffe communications were solved but only 24 percent of Wehrmacht messages.<sup>b</sup> The coming from the "horse's mouth" feature of these intercepts could mislead, as Adolf Hitler and his commanders changed their minds. Initial decrypts wrongly indicated that Hitler intended to abandon southern Italy in 1943 without putting up much of a fight. But, after seeing how poorly the Allied forces fought in Salerno, he decided to make a stand.<sup>c</sup> Roberts flags a number of such instances, including:

a. Max Hastings, *The Secret War* (Harper Collins, 2016), 404.

b. *Ibid.*, 408.

c. *Ibid.*, 309.

•**Greece.** Churchill leapt on intercepts in late 1940 that indicated Germany was concentrating forces in the Balkans, indicating in his mind an intention to go to war with Greece. However, Hitler only intended to seize Greek territory in the north to protect his right flank for the planned invasion of the Soviet Union. The arrival of British troops in Greece caused Hitler to change his mind and take the whole country. (626)

•**Russia.** Churchill passed intelligence to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin that the German High Command had ordered in late March 1941 three armored divisions to move from the Balkans to Poland, the implication being the Wehrmacht was preparing to invade the Soviet Union. The countermanding of these orders—to deal with troubles in Yugoslavia—no doubt reinforced Stalin's suspicions that the staunchly anti-communist Churchill was trying to trick his country into an unnecessary war with Germany. (645)

•**North Africa.** In March and April 1942, Churchill tried to persuade General Auchinleck that his German counterpart Rommel had far fewer tanks than estimated. In using this supposed vulnerability as a reason to urge an attack, Churchill misread the decrypts, which referred to tanks in certain areas, but not overall. Churchill eventually acknowledged his mistake. (725)

These blunders and overreactions made it easy to dismiss Churchill as a hedgehog who knew only one important thing in his opposition to Nazi Germany. In his inspired conclusion to the book, Roberts instead views Churchill as a fox who knew many important things. "When it came to all three of the mortal threats to Western civilization, by the Prussian militarists in 1914, the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s, and Soviet communism after the Second World War, Churchill's judgment stood far above that of the people who sneered at his." (966) He accurately foresaw in December 1941 how WW II would play out strategically, despite his often impulsive tactical preferences. (699) Even his gravest failure, the Gallipoli operation in 1915, had promise conceptually, at least in some minds, but it was bungled terribly in its execution, and went on for too long. (197) The specter of a shortened life did not stop Brooke after WW II from thanking God for "having my eyes opened to the fact that occasionally such supermen exist on earth." (979)



**The reviewer:** Thomas G. Coffey is a member of CSI's Lessons Learned Program. His work and frequent reviews focus on the relationship between intelligence and policy.



***Spy Pilot: Francis Gary Powers, The U-2 Incident, and a Controversial Cold War Legacy***

Francis Gary Powers, Jr. and Keith Dunavant (Prometheus Books, 2019), 296 pages, author's note, foreword, introduction, acknowledgements, list of interviews, notes, index.

***Reviewed by David A. Foy***

---

Children often have questions about their parents' lives, a curiosity that often grows over time or relative to publicity. This latter motivation explains the publication of *Spy Pilot*, a son's 50-year quest for truth concerning his father, who happened to be famed—or defamed—U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, felled by the explosion of a Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missile close to his reconnaissance aircraft on 1 May 1960, launching an international incident.

Before delving into Powers's life story, the authors present in the foreword and introduction some of the key individuals in Gary Powers Jr.'s circle of friends, such as Sergei Khrushchev—Nikita's son—and former *Wild, Wild West* TV star Robert Conrad, a family friend. Sergei notes that both he and Gary Jr. have a “desire to honor and preserve the legacy” of their respective fathers, which creates a common bond. In 1977, Conrad tells a nine-year-old Gary Jr. “Your father was a good man, no matter what you might hear.” (14)

The authors begin their story with the singular event that defined the life of Francis Gary Powers—an indulgent airplane ride at a small airfield in rural Virginia on the way to a family picnic in the early days of World War II. This momentous event convinced Powers that he needed to find a career as a pilot, though his coal miner father hoped he would go into medicine to escape a hard life of poverty. Instead, Powers enlisted in the US Air Force shortly after the Korean War armistice and by July 1953 was excelling as the pilot of an F-84 Thunderjet fighter. In April 1955, he married Barbara Gay Moore, several months before his enlistment expired. He inquired about civilian pilot opportunities but when no one showed any interest, decided instead to make the Air Force a career.

In the 1950s, political and intelligence officials were obsessed with the reputed “bomber gap,” the oft-repeated assertion that the Soviet Union had more and better intercontinental bombers than the United States. To disprove

such assertions, President Dwight Eisenhower needed the imagery that the U-2 could provide. He reluctantly allowed overflights of the Soviet Union before a scheduled May 1960 Paris summit meeting but none after 1 May, the date of the flight for which Powers—who was “driven by the desire to do something patriotic for his country” (50)—was selected as the pilot.

When Powers took off from a base in Peshawar, Pakistan, on Sunday, 1 May 1960, he decided this time to take the silver dollar that contained a poison-dipped needle in case he was captured and unable to endure the torture that might ensue. The authors reiterate the key point that U-2 pilots were neither required nor even expected to use the poison pin to avoid capture. Powers was thankfully unaware that recent improvements to Soviet SAMs, particularly the SA-2, colloquially known as the “flying telephone pole,” enabled it to reach the maximum altitude for a U-2, although he discovered that unfortunate fact some four hours into Mission 4154, known as “Grand Slam.”

Powers was taking notes when his thoughts were powerfully interrupted by a bright orange flash that he later estimated was behind and to the right of his aircraft, at his current elevation of 70,500 feet. The shock wave apparently detached the tail of the aircraft and caused the wings to break off. As the aircraft spiraled out of control, Powers realized that if he activated his ejection seat, the explosion would likely sever his legs. He instead decided to blow the canopy and bail out, but as soon as the canopy fell away, he was thrown out of the aircraft before he could reach the button that would destroy the camera but not the aircraft itself. He thought of using the poison needle, but decided not to because of his religious beliefs and an earlier conversation with his father about the eternal consequences of suicide. He landed in a plowed field, with onlookers standing by, one of whom relieved Powers of his sidearm. The authorities were notified, and within hours the captive pilot was on a commercial flight to Moscow, courtesy of the KGB.

---

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

---

Barbara, in government quarters at a military base in Adana, Turkey, was notified that Powers's aircraft had not returned from the mission. As officials promptly flew her back to the States, she hoped "Frank," as she and others knew him, was alive and would soon return home. Key administration officials hoped just the opposite—"It would be much more convenient for the American government if he were dead." (74) By Monday morning, President Eisenhower was assured that the aircraft was likely destroyed and the pilot dead, and within hours NASA had released a cover story that the U-2 had gone down on a routine weather mission. To keep Eisenhower above the fray, the decision was made that the State Department would take the lead in dealing with Russian authorities.

Meanwhile, Powers had been taken to the notorious Lubyanka Prison in Moscow for interrogation, which continued for 19 days, sometimes for 11 hours a day. An exultant Premier Nikita Khrushchev bided his time before he sprang his trap, displaying not only pieces of the wreckage in a Moscow park but also the very-much-alive pilot. A cornered Eisenhower confessed the true nature of the mission, for which he was roundly condemned. The captive pilot fell into a "fatalistic despair" over how his wife and family would take the news. In Milledgeville, Georgia, the physician treating Barbara Powers for a broken leg and a bronchial infection, was asked by a CIA friend to keep an eye on Mrs. Powers, especially her mental health.

In Powers's hometown of Pound, Virginia, his distraught father, Oliver, wrote Khrushchev a letter, one father to another, begging for Frank's release. In response, the Soviet leader invited Oliver for a visit but made clear that his son would not be released. When Oliver sold Frank's story to the media, it drove a wedge between Powers's wife and his parents, and the two parties flew to Moscow separately for the trial, with CIA paying for the travel of Barbara, her mother, attorneys, and Dr. Baugh. Powers's trial began on 17 August, his 31st birthday, and featured his contrite address, which appeared to many as overly conciliatory. Powers spoke of his shame and regret, a display prompting the authors to note, "The indignity of a US serviceman apologizing to the Soviets was difficult for many of Powers' fellow citizens to accept." (100) At the conclusion of the three-day trial, Powers was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment—three years in prison, the remainder in a labor camp.

The authors describe the downing of Powers's U-2 as "like a grenade tossed into the bitterly contested 1960 presidential election." (104) Adding fuel to the fire was the presumption—based on the erroneous belief by some that Soviet missiles could not reach the U-2 at maximum altitude—that Powers had to have descended, making his downing more likely and leaving him more culpable, a perception that refused to be dispelled. However, the election of John F. Kennedy as president prompted the freeing of two American RB-47 bomber crewmen, who had also been interrogated at Lubyanka, giving Powers the hope of a similar release. But the debacle of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the construction of the Berlin Wall dispelled any such hopes. However, an offer made by Oliver Powers to swap his son for imprisoned Soviet KGB Colonel William Fisher, aka "Rudolph Abel," ultimately led, some 21 months later, to the famous spy swap of 10 February 1962 that freed Powers, an event popularized in the recent film *Bridge of Spies*. A US Air Force plane was dispatched to fly Powers home, but the aloof and hostile treatment by the crew proved to be an omen, a visible and palpable symbol of a nation's persistent discomfiture with the young U-2 pilot and his experience.

Frank was reunited with his parents at a CIA safe house in Maryland, along with Barbara, 30 pounds heavier and smelling of alcohol. A reporter's embarrassing discovery of the safehouse prompted relocation to the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, area for three weeks of debriefing. Although DCI Allen Dulles told Powers that "We are proud of what you have done," that was a minority opinion and not shared by Dulles's successor, John McCone, who appointed a board of inquiry to investigate the shutdown. Following eight days of closed-door hearings, the board exonerated Powers, authorized him \$52,500 in back pay, and returned him to CIA.

For Powers, his inconvenient survival and his apparent display of contrition would plague him the rest of his days. He was shocked by media articles that questioned his patriotism, dubbing him as "something less than a hero." (119) Writer of the James Bond novels and World War II intelligence veteran Ian Fleming caustically commented, "He was expendable. Expend him!" (123) The most hurtful blow, however, came from the White House, which at the last minute cancelled his scheduled 6 March 1962 personal meeting with the president—no explanation was given, though it soon became known that Attorney General Bobby Kennedy wanted to try Powers

for treason. Powers was especially pained when he recalled that the RB-47 pilots had been welcomed to the Oval Office.

Meantime, much as the U-2 had, Powers's personal life went into a death spiral. Divorce, remarriage, and relocation to California in service as a test pilot for Lockheed followed. While there, he wrote an autobiography, over CIA objections, published as *Operation Overflight*. Lockheed then fired him, which both Frank and his son believed was done at CIA's behest, fueling Frank's "creeping cynicism and resentment" of the agency. (137) Frank then became a reporter for local radio station KGIL, piloting a traffic helicopter. Just 10 months later, on 1 August 1977, his chopper crashed while he reported on California wildfires, and Frank was killed instantly.

Francis Gary Powers Jr. was nine years old at the time, and his reaction to the tragedy in the coming years would cause him to go increasingly off the rails—cutting class, drinking alcohol, breaking and entering, stealing test results, picking locks. But as his internal compass righted itself, he had a growing desire to learn the truth about his dad, becoming what he termed "a vigorous defender of my father's memory." (170) In 1990, at 25 years old, Frank Jr. managed to wrangle an invitation to the 30th anniversary of the shootdown in Moscow, where he saw from afar pieces of his dad's plane, stood in his dad's former cell, and immersed himself in his father's experience and thoughts. Five years later, he met Sergei Khrushchev (who became a US citizen in 1991), and in 1996, when Powers Jr. founded the Cold War Museum, Sergei became a member of the board of directors; as he put it, "It is important that we remember." (169)

Following a 1998 declassification conference at Ft. McNair, Powers Jr. located a document indicating that when his father was shot down, he was flying at 70,500 feet, finally dispelling the idea that Frank had descended before the explosion. Powers Jr. continued to push the Air Force to award his dad the POW Medal, which the service ultimately did, and donated a large collection of items to the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in 1995. Not until after the fall of the Soviet Union did Powers Jr. learn from former Soviet officials an unknown part of his father's story—in a "friendly fire" incident, one of the MiG fighters dispatched to shoot down the U-2 was destroyed by another SA-2 missile, killing the pilot, Sergei Safronov.

ov. Powers Jr. tells of connecting with Safronov's son and coming to a touching reconciliation. (262)

Reminded that the RB-47 pilots had received Silver Star medals, Frank Jr. was energized to push for one for his dad, a request finally approved in December 2011. It took the approval of President Jimmy Carter to do so, but he was able to get permission to have his father buried at Arlington National Cemetery, although the Air Force allowed only an Honor Guard to represent the service. Still looking for answers, he returned to Moscow in December 2017 and, in the company of a pair of former KGB officers, visited the Hall of Columns, where his father's trial had taken place 57 years earlier. During this trip Frank Jr. became, as he put it, "a man at peace"—with his father's actions, with the restoration of his father's good name, and with his mission to tell the story of the Cold War, with a powerful personal twist.

Regrettably, the book is marred by several factual errors, items not mentioned in Joseph Goulden's February 2019 review of the book in the *Washington Times*. The authors misidentify OSS as the "Office of Special Services" (28) and exhibit ignorance of both the origins of CIA and the way the agency conducts covert action. The implication that CIA's presence in the offices on E St. Northwest in Washington in the early days was somehow "spooky" is belied by the CIA sign that hung outside for all to read. The authors also used poetic license in spelling the "Bridge of Spies" as the "Glienicke Bridge" (164).

On the other hand, the authors note that one of the first Americans to see the wreckage of the U-2 in Moscow was, amazingly, the father of Steven Spielberg, who was on business in Moscow at the time, and who also expressed the opinion that "CIA failed its pilots by not preparing them to be captured," (72) a lesson apparently not learned from the experiences of World War II POWs, who made the same lament. The text is nicely complemented by several photos, including three from the Center for the Study of Intelligence publication *The CIA and the U-2 Program, 1954–1974*, though readers will note the glaring omission of any photos of Barbara.

In sum, *Spy Pilot* is a brief but engaging and readable book on a significant event in Cold War history, a deeply personal book about a young man's relentless search for the truth about his often-maligned father and his ultimate recognition as a hero.



***Grand Improvisation: America Confronts the British Superpower, 1945–1957***

Derek Leebaert (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2018), 612 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index.

**Reviewed by Leslie C.**

---

In *Grand Improvisation*, Derek Leebaert has produced a beautifully written example of what one could call “in-your-face” revisionist history. While not everyone will agree with his conclusions, his road to them is engagingly presented, thoroughly documented, and sumptuously decorated with studies of the drama’s players, many of whom are familiar, but some of whom the field has overlooked. His premise is simple: the accepted notion that the United States emerged from World War II as a superpower while Great Britain, mortally wounded by global conflict, could not maintain its great power status, is a myth. As the title suggests, the author argues another decade was necessary for the United States to supplant Great Britain’s preeminence in the West, a decade marked by amateurish reaction in Washington and shrewd calculation in London.

The book’s thematic thrust may strike a chord with intelligence officers familiar with the notion—dating to the fraught wartime relationship between the OSS and SIS—of wise Brits patiently mentoring the junior service. The idea extends beyond intelligence to diplomacy and economics, though Leebaert is careful to distinguish among British leaders. Winston Churchill, for example, “never shared the British establishment’s nervous patronizing of America,” but “the two Conservative prime ministers who would follow him, Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan, were seeing themselves as ancient Greeks who needed to instruct the rising imperial presence in the subtleties of worldly ways.” (21) Perhaps unfortunately for President Harry Truman, British voters rejected Churchill before Japan’s surrender, leaving Washington to face a Labour Party whose leaders were conditioned by war and decades of trade union politicking.

Is the idea that Americans were amateurs in need of British instruction valid? Remember the United States had isolated itself from old world power politics for much of its history. It had engaged in coalition warfare, but was immediately thereafter faced with a series of challenges as the world adjusted to post-conflict realities. It was clear at Yalta and Potsdam that the alliance of convenience with the Soviet Union would not long survive the

Third Reich’s demise, but what of the emerging “Special Relationship”? America’s economic heft, manifested in Washington’s attempt to impose a global trade regime to benefit American producers, and lingering hostility toward Britain’s empire, obliged London to play a gradually weakening hand. There are numerous instances in this narrative of artful British manipulation of Washington through the practice of identifying nationalist movements as communist, or backed by Moscow.

Sir Gladwyn Jebb, Britain’s Ambassador to the UN who became a celebrity in the United States during his tenure in New York, told King George VI that Americans were too emotional and allowed Korea to distract them from other important issues. “Only the British . . . he believed, could think dispassionately and strategically at the level necessary to defend Western interests.” (266) Jebb subtly advocated for Truman’s removal of General Douglas MacArthur by having British Embassy officials approach senior US officials indirectly to “avoid confronting Secretary of Defense Marshall and an unpredictable [Secretary of State] Dean Acheson. Better to raise questions about MacArthur’s sanity via their trusted advisers and to do so at the right moment, as opinions in the capital wavered over how to face MacArthur’s affronts to civil authority.” (284)

More provocative is Leebaert’s thesis about the depth of American amateurism. He dismisses a slew of well-regarded early Cold War initiatives, including the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and Containment, as “desperate improvisations.” Regarding US reaction to the 1947 British request for assistance in Greece, the author writes, “Truman’s speech was heavily improvised, as shown by its having to garb U.S. involvement in a democratic crusade without pausing to ask, And then what? . . . Whitehall officials . . . also recognized the unformed thinking.” (87) He dismisses the idea that American policy resembled the product of strategic thought, much less grand strategy: “Significantly, it takes time and knowledge to formulate a grand strategy, or at least it takes being aware of the many steps under way.

---

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

---

In the spring of 1947 there wasn't an opportunity for all this, or so beleaguered U.S. decision makers had reason to believe. Instead, the sequence of Truman Doctrine-Marshall Plan-Containment was just shy of winging it." (101–02) Neither does Leebaert spare George Kennan, the "Father of Containment, writing: ". . . he came to define many of his country's worst habits of policy making. He was emotional, often careless and impulsive, and frequently amateurish." (251–52)

The narrative traces interactions between British and US officials over a menu of foreign and economic policy issues, from Stalin's intransigence in Eastern Europe, to the end of the mandate in Palestine and Israel's birth, to the reverberations emanating from the ebb of empire in East Asia, to lingering Soviet efforts to extend Moscow's influence in the Persian Gulf. This last is notable, because the British remained sensitive about their Middle East position, from the Suez Canal to the Iranian oilfields. Across all of these, the British stubbornly retained a grip on their prerogatives against what they perceived as the dangerous enthusiasms of American neophytes. In 1952, British diplomat Oliver Franks told the Foreign Office, "Americans . . . never have grand strategies. What passes for considered policy . . . is instead a twisting sequence of ad hoc decisions hammered out under the stresses of domestic politics." (352)

It was in drafting the review more than reading the book that I came to realize this theme's pervasiveness. Leebaert is less an Anglophile than a Jeremiah decrying unfortunate tendencies in American foreign policy, and it is here I would offer a criticism. As skillfully as the British played a diminishing hand, they were not without responsibility in some of the decisions their troublesome ally made. On the edges of the 1954 Geneva Conference, Anthony Eden observed, "They want to run the world. . . . They want to replace us in Egypt too." Leebaert comments, "He might have been correct about U.S. impulsiveness in Vietnam, but here he was wrong. The Americans weren't that calculating; they didn't want to 'replace' anyone, let alone 'run' anything. They were still reacting crisis to crisis. And what they intended at this early date in Vietnam was another Truman-like emergency response to Communist aggression, implemented only with allies." (414)

While British unease with US policy in Vietnam is well-known, less recognized is Malcolm MacDonald, Governor General of Malaya and Singapore. Leebaert

writes, "MacDonald was the only senior Western official who was on the scene in Southeast Asia for nearly ten critical years, from 1946 until 1955, and his influence on the Americans became profound. As we'll see, no French politician or general, no American congressman or admiral, comes close to having his impact on the U.S. decisions that led America step by step into Vietnam." (128–29) It seems the British carry some weight for the Domino Theory, ex post facto moralizing notwithstanding.

Similarly, Leebaert writes of October 1951, when Churchill and the Conservatives returned to power, "Acheson likened them to 'people who have been asleep for five years.' The problem went deeper, however, than Acheson recognized. Churchill, Eden, and the war-hardened men around them had been out of office since the summer of 1945. They hadn't directly been responsible for any of the arduous dealings with Washington thereafter. Nor had they been on the front lines of global conflict since defeating the Reich. The notion of serving as anyone's junior partner was not in their experience." (327) As evocative as this is, it flies in the face of well-documented British recognition as the Second World War progressed that the United States was increasingly calling the shots, a reality even more evident during the war on the Korean Peninsula.

By 1956 and the Suez Crisis this was incontrovertible, as President Eisenhower intervened decisively to end an Anglo-French-Israeli filibuster in Egypt. Leebaert concludes Suez revealed "how extensively Britain's postwar greatness rested on memory and bluff." (481) Developments in the superpower sweepstakes confirmed it: while the British developed both atomic and hydrogen bombs to demonstrate their relevance, the Sputnik shock of 1957 and subsequent ICBM race promised "the faintest tremor in the world could be expected to bring direct U.S.-Russian confrontation, with every showdown having the potential to go nuclear. Any pretense of three superpowers existing on the planet was laid to rest: only the United States and Russia could compete indefinitely at this level." (496)

Leebaert concludes that while the United States may have succeeded Britain as *primus inter pares* among the Western allies by the end of the Eisenhower administration, the sense that British foreign policy manifested superior expertise and technique was reinforced during Kennedy's. The Americans learned little from the experience, as

“A level of excitement and incaution followed that, with few interruptions, has characterized U.S. foreign policy making ever since.” Why? Because of a foreign policy and national security apparatus filled from the top down with what Leebaert styles “emergency men,” a concept he first introduced in his 2002 book, *The Fifty-Year Wound*.<sup>a</sup> “These are the clever, energetic, self-assured, well-schooled men, and now women, who seize on the opportunities intrinsic to the American system of political appointments to juggle enormous risk and are drawn to national security policy by its atmosphere of secrecy, decisiveness, and apocalyptic stakes.” (501)

Leebaert’s reinterpretations aside, the other great pleasure is the quality of his writing. I noticed just one

---

a. *The Fifty-Year Wound: The True Price of America’s Cold War Victory* (Little Brown, 2002).

avoidable error, when he identified SOE as “Strategic Operations Executive”; it was in fact “Special Operations Executive.” The author has a talent for pithy description of the personalities populating the narrative. We learn, for example, that Acheson was not the Anglophile of sainted memory; that John Foster Dulles was not the humorless Puritan of common caricature; and much else besides. I will offer one example here, where Leebaert writes of Harry Vaughan, friend and military advisor of Harry Truman, and alumnus of Westminster College (where Churchill delivered his Iron Curtain speech): “He exemplified the random talents thrown into high office by political patronage.” (43) This is of a piece with the book’s theme—that the United States ultimately eclipsed Great Britain and its professional civil servant class not because of patronage and its encouragement of “emergency men,” but despite them.



**The reviewer:** Leslie C. is a career CIA Directorate of Operations officer who has an interest in intelligence history.





**Freedom's Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science**

Audra J. Wolfe (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 302 pp.

**Reviewed by J.R. Seeger**

---

At the end of World War II, the victorious Western powers of the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, along with the recently liberated Western European nations of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, faced a new and more complex European challenge from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The leadership of the USSR described in detail and in public their commitment to expanding the communist revolution throughout Europe and into Asia. In his famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill captured the West's concern by stating, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent."<sup>a</sup>

Countries the Soviet armies liberated held elections under Soviet control. By 1949, all of these countries had become "socialist republics" allied to the USSR. In October 1949, the People's Republic of China defeated the forces of the Republic of China and established control over all of mainland China. International communist organizations created by the USSR sponsored Communist International or Comintern, were revived by the USSR and began political activities throughout Western Europe. To the leaders of the West, the actions of the USSR demonstrated the return of an expansionist effort on the part of the Kremlin consistent with actions observed and, to some extent, countered in the 1920s and early 1930s. The Soviet blockade of West Berlin between 1948 and 1949, the test of a nuclear device in August 1949, along with the Soviet success in launching Sputnik, the world's first orbiting satellite in October 1957 underscored the seriousness of the new, superpower competition.

Alone among the Western Allies, the United States had survived World War II without widespread destruction of its cities and industries. The United States could and, in fact, did commit to military confrontation in the face of Soviet expansion and to creation of alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April of

1949. However, US presidents throughout the Cold War realized that the risk of nuclear war in any world war scenario would devastate America and the West, regardless of how successful US and allied forces might be against the USSR. There had to be another way to stop Soviet aggression and, over time, even roll back Soviet control over Eastern Europe. The most famous effort in the earliest days of the Cold War was the Marshall Plan, in which the United States offered to help rebuild Europe on either side of the Iron Curtain. Financial support to the struggling economies of Western Europe from 1948 to 1952 forged a political and economic alliance in the West as strong as any of the military alliances created during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. From the "political warfare" standpoint, the Marshall Plan's success was enhanced by Soviet instructions to their surrogates in the Eastern Bloc to reject any Western support.

It is in this Cold War context that Dr. Wolfe's book, *Freedom's Laboratory*, begins. The US leadership both in the White House and in Congress was convinced that the Soviet Union was committed to the destruction of the West. Any/all measures that might prevent, or at least delay, a conflict between the two nuclear armed superpowers had to be taken. In her previous work, *Competing with the Soviets*,<sup>b</sup> Dr. Wolfe focused primarily on the overt political economy of the "military-industrial complex" and the effects on scientific and technology research, most especially in the 1950s and early 1960s. Using this research as a starting point and then by working through recently declassified materials, Dr. Wolfe focuses her attention in this new book on the clandestine efforts of the CIA to influence science and scientists in support of a larger US policy to counter Soviet propaganda.

The general details of this effort as described in *Freedom's Laboratory* will not be new to any student of the Cold War or covert influence. What might be surprising

---

a. Westminster College archives. [www.westminster-mo.edu](http://www.westminster-mo.edu).

---

b. *Competing with the Soviets: Science, Technology, and the State in Cold War America* (Johns Hopkins University Press 2013).

---

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

---

are some of her stated perspectives. In the introduction, Dr. Wolfe says,

*Early Cold War psychological warfare campaigns consistently contrasted US individualism with Soviet collectivism. Given the near impossibility of conveying this message through government-sponsored programs, most of this work was carried out by private individuals, not all of whom realized they were participating in US psychological warfare campaigns. This brings us to one of the US government's more curious choices in the fight against Communism. From 1950 until 1967, when its covers were blown, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funded and supervised a number of nominally private organizations engaged in the work of cultural diplomacy. (5)*

In fact, the “curious choice” described in her introduction is covered in great detail in Hugh Wilford’s book, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*<sup>a</sup> in 2008 and, recently, in Sarah Miller Harris’s book, *The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the Early Cold War*.<sup>b</sup> It was a clear choice on the part of the White House to direct the CIA to conduct the operations. George Kennan, the head of the Policy Planning Staff (PPS) at the State Department understood the importance of the program, but this type of effort was outside State’s remit. Director of Central Intelligence Roscoe Hillenkoetter wanted the CIA to focus exclusively on intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination and to stay clear of what the Office of Strategic Services in World War II would have called “special operations” and “morale operations.” The White House had to direct the DCI using National Security Directive NSC-4A to run the operation.

Frank Wisner and his team at the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) within CIA ran covert influence operations throughout the early Cold War, often with direction from Kennan at the PPS. They did so using a number of different front organizations, which were funded through complex, clandestine networks. In most cases, OPC operations focused on delivering strategic guidance for what today would be called influence “payload.” OPC allowed

the front organizations and their employees, who were often completely unwitting of US involvement, to design the specifics of the payload. This was not in any way a “curious choice.” It was the only credible choice.

What makes Dr. Wolfe’s work worth reading is that as a scholar in the history of science she focuses on one specific target audience in the Wurlitzer enterprise: scientists. As she says in the introduction,

*Over the past twenty-five years, historians and journalists have produced dozens, perhaps even hundreds of books and articles documenting the extraordinary range of this cultural offensive, in both its overt and covert forms. Science is oddly absent from these accounts. (5)*

Given the subtitle of the book, focusing on the “soul of science,” Dr. Wolfe does not hide her perspective on the US effort to influence the international scientific community. However, Wolfe admits in the penultimate chapter,

*Unlike most of the United States’ other attempts to destroy Communism through culture, science diplomacy worked. Not in the way that Frank Wisner’s Office of Policy Coordination or Michael Josselson’s Congress for Cultural Freedom intended—Soviet intellectuals didn’t defect en masse or attempt to overthrow the Kremlin. . . . Nevertheless, by the time the Cold War ended, Soviet scientists were more likely to quote H.J. Muller than J.D. Bernal on the question of “party lines” of science. (197).*

Unfortunately, in the epilogue, Dr. Wolfe crosses the line into polemics. In this final chapter, she focuses her writing not on summarizing her work but on the complex world in the second decade of the 21st century and specifically in the first two years of the administration of President Trump. She writes:

*The postwar scenario in the United States, in which (white, male) scientists received virtually unlimited research funds to investigate whatever they wanted, so long as their questions didn’t upset existing power structures, was a historical anomaly rather than a naturally occurring state of affairs. For a brief twenty-year period, the public at large and the country’s political leadership deferred to elite judgment—including that of scientists—in a tacit agreement that elites would contribute to the national interest. Now*

---

a. *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Harvard University Press, 2008). See former CIA historian Michael Warner’s review in *Studies in Intelligence* 52 no. 2 (June 2008).

b. *The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the Early Cold War: The Limits of Making Common Cause* (Routledge, 2016).

*that the structures of power no longer value independent thought, a common public good, or global opinion, US scientists are at a loss to explain why the government should support an autonomous scientific community. (207)*

It is worth noting that CIA influence efforts took place under four presidents, Democrat and Republican. It is equally important to consider the context of the program. For those of us who lived at a time when elementary school children participated in air raid drills and when Americans were encouraged to build bomb shelters, it is easy to forgive any effort to influence international science in ways that might delay or disrupt a Soviet attack on the United States. Kevin McCauley's recent (2016) independently published work on KGB influence operations is also essential reading in any effort to balance OPC operations against the context of Soviet campaigns. McCauley offers a detailed explanation of how KGB coordinated as many as 10 different tactics in their covert actions.<sup>a</sup> Deception, provocation, fabrication, agents of influence, disinformation, and even political assassination were combined as part of Soviet "active measures." OPC's operations seem almost "gentlemanly" in comparison. As with any analysis of historic decisionmaking, the

a. Kevin N. McCauley, *Russian Influence Campaigns Against the West* (Create Space Independent Publishing, 2016), 6.

often quoted first line of L.P. Harley's novel is a useful starting point: *The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.*<sup>b</sup>

Even with these caveats and the pointed epilogue that strays far from the early Cold War, Dr. Wolfe's research on this subject is extensive and covers published and, importantly, recently declassified material. In an appendix entitled "Sources and Methods" the author describes in detail her work with archival material, and it is impressive. This means that even if a reader does not agree with her perspective, it would be a mistake to not read this book.

However, Dr. Wolfe might have spent more effort learning how the Intelligence Community worked (and works) and how it is directed from the White House through National Security Directives and other instructions—usually readily available in the National Archives, presidential libraries, and elsewhere. Covert action has been the responsibility of CIA, a responsibility defined in various national security authorizations, US Code Title 50, and by virtually every president since the creation of CIA in 1947. But, these types of operations only take place at the specific direction of the president, delivered via formal directives from the National Security Council.

b. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (Penguin Books, 1973).



**The reviewer:** J. R. Seeger is a retired CIA operations officer and frequent contributor of reviews.



## **Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf**

*Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake*

---

Note to readers:

Owing to health matters, Hayden Peake was able to provide only four reviews; additional reviews were prepared by Robert W. Wallace and J. E. Leonardson (as noted below).

### **HISTORICAL**

***The First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington***, by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch

***Hall of Mirrors: Virginia Hall America's Greatest Spy of WWII***, by Craig Gralley

***The Millionaire Was a Soviet Mole: The Twisted Life of David Karr***, by Harvey Klehr

***Nuking the Moon and Other Intelligence Schemes and Military Plots Left on the Drawing Board***, by Vince Houghton (Reviewed by Robert W. Wallace)

### **MEMOIR**

***Gray Day: My Undercover Mission to Expose America's First Cyberspy***, by Eric O'Neill (Reviewed by J. E. Leonardson)

### **INTELLIGENCE ABROAD**

***Shadow Strike: Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power***, by Yaakov Katz

---

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

---



## HISTORICAL

***The First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington***, by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch. (Flatiron Books, 2018) 413, endnotes, bibliography, photos, maps, index.

In his 1959 book *Turncoats, Traitors, and Heroes*, Harvard historian John Bakeless, a former Army intelligence officer, included a chapter entitled “Kidnapping George Washington.” Well documented from court-martial records, contemporary letters, and news accounts, the basic plot has never been questioned, though other historians have referred to it as a plan “to assassinate the commander-in-chief.” *The First Conspiracy* is the most detailed examination of the case to date and it seeks to determine whether the plotters were “trying to kill George Washington, kidnap him, or something else?” (x)

A brief digression is necessary here because of the book’s incongruous title. First, the subtitle of the book implies an answer to the question above, but the book does not conclude that assassination was the aim. Second, the idea that the subject of this story was “the first conspiracy” is historically mistaken, as the authors eventually add the qualification that the conspiracy was the first against the Continental government.

Chronologically, the plot takes place during the first six months of 1776, before independence was proclaimed. Meltzer and Mensch integrate several themes, adding in each case background on the principals and events not found in other accounts. The first theme is George Washington’s role as commander and his contacts with congressional committees. The second deals with the plotters and how they operated under the direction of the governor of New York colony, William Tryon. The third theme covers revelation of the plot by a jailed counterfeiter’s accomplice, Isaac Ketcham, who reported to the colonial authorities to save him-

self that at least one of the plotters, Thomas Hickey, was one of Washington’s handpicked bodyguards. The final theme addresses how Washington dealt with Hickey in a public court-martial and prompt hanging.

The authors point out anomalies so far unexplained in history. For example, why was only Hickey court-martialed when at least five bodyguards were named as suspects? Then there is the charge that Mary Smith, Washington’s housekeeper, was part of the plot. (274–77) Perhaps the most curious of all was the unexplained reference in Washington’s general order concerning the Hickey hanging that mentions “lewd women” as a causative factor. (311)

In the end, the authors find no smoking gun to allow them to conclude whether the plotters planned to kill or just kidnap Washington, but they do offer assessments of the likelihood of each alternative.

*The First Conspiracy* concludes with observations on the consequences of the discovery and defeat of the plot. Very important, the authors suggest, was the creation of the Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, which was headed by Washington’s colleague John Jay. (355) They add that the act established counterintelligence as a vital function, though “security” might be a more accurate characterization. Of equal value for Washington would be the staff members he selected to serve him for the rest of the war, and they are discussed briefly.

Although the narrative is occasionally over dramatic, Meltzer and Mensch have provided as complete an account of the plot as is likely to emerge.

***Hall of Mirrors: Virginia Hall America's Greatest Spy of WWII***, by Craig Gralley. (chrysalis-pub.com, 2019) 222 pages.

The first biography of Virginia Hall appeared in 2005. A second was published in 2019. While the basic events are the same in both, the same events are ascribed to different to characters in each book and only the second has some, though not enough, source notes. And now former CIA officer Craig Gralley has contributed a third version, based on “years of research and hundreds of historical documents” that gave him sufficient insight into his subject that he decided to write the book in Hall’s voice thus producing a “historical novel.” (viii)

This format gives Gralley creative license to mix pseudonyms and true names without letting the reader know which is which. In a variation of this option, since some names (for example, Maurice Buckmaster of SOE)

are well known, dialogue between Hall and the officer can be created that never took place. Page 5 includes an instance that nominally covers Hall’s SOE recruitment. And that is all right for a novel, but the subject is also covered in the other two biographies with different participants at different locations and times. For those wishing to know the truth about Hall’s extraordinary career *Hall of Mirrors* should not be the starting point.

In terms of sourcing, since none of the three books answer all the important, “How do they know this?” questions implicit in the narrative, a scholarly comparative analysis based on archival documents remains to be done before the truth can be established.

***The Millionaire Was a Soviet Mole: The Twisted Life of David Karr***, by Harvey Klehr. (Encounter Books, 2019) 260, endnotes, index.

*Amerasia* was a journal of Far Eastern affairs published between 1937 and 1947—not to be confused with the existing academic *Amerasia Journal*—by two Soviet agents who ran afoul of the FBI after classified OSS and State and War Department documents were found in their editorial offices. The resulting *Amerasia* Affair was the subject of the 1996 book by historians Harvey Klehr and Ronald Radosh. One of the communists Klehr came across in the course of his research for the book was David Karr, a man with intriguing credentials. According to Klehr, Karr “knew or met with every president from FDR to Gerald Ford.” (2–3) Published Soviet archives revealed that Karr was “a competent KGB source.” (157) So Klehr decided to write a book about Karr, but it had to wait until he became Andrew W. Mellon Professor Emeritus of Politics and History at Emory University. *The Millionaire Was a Soviet Mole* is the result.

The book is a biography that emphasizes the diverse professional life Karr led. Its major parts Klehr covers in separate chapters. Named David Katz at birth in

Brooklyn, New York, on 24 August 1918, he tested in high school with a genius IQ, though his academic track record was poor. His one interest was sports writing, and Klehr tells how Karr maneuvered from menial jobs to writing for *The Daily Worker*, where he came into contact with many well known communists. Those relationships stigmatized him as a communist, and though he claimed never to have joined the party, others asserted that he had. (15) In any case, Klehr shows Karr was an atypical capitalist-communist, if there was such a thing.

During WW II, Karr, who was deaf in one ear, joined the Office of War Information, which made public approved information about the war effort. He was investigated by the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, where he claimed, falsely, that he was an FBI informant. Finding no proof he was a communist, OWI dismissed Karr for lying to the committee. Then, after a brief stint with the *Washington Post*, he went to work for columnist Drew Pearson as an often unscrupulous but aggressive investigative reporter. (41)



Klehr discovered indications that while associated with Pearson from the mid-1940s to early 1950s, Karr was also some sort of Soviet source. As was characteristic of his behavior, Karr established influential contacts. Those documented during this period include Harry Dexter White—Karr called him a friend—Larry Duggan and Duncan Lee, to name three who were later confirmed as Soviet agents. It was also at this time that Karr was linked to the *Amerasia* case and named once by NKVD officer, Vladimir Pravdin, in a Venona cable. (49) Then Senator McCarthy accused him of being “a Soviet intelligence mole.” (3) Seeking a change of scenery from anti-communist Washington, Karr became a successful public relations flack in New York, a Hollywood producer, and multi-millionaire businessman in France.

But it is in the chapter titled “Soviet Agent” that Klehr lays out his evidence that Karr became at least an agent-of-influence and a paid KGB source sometime in the early 1970s. (158) Based in Paris, Karr made his first trip to Moscow with Armand Hammer and then-presidential hopeful Sargent Shriver in 1972 and began developing new contacts.

Karr did conduct legitimate business, in Moscow, however. For example, he built the 1,777-room Kosmos, the first Western hotel constructed in Moscow since the

revolution, and he arranged high-level deals that allowed Jews to relocate to Israel. But of greater interest were the meetings he organized with Soviets and American politicians who visited Moscow in the 1970s. Besides Shriver, he worked with Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator John Tunney, facilitating contacts with the KGB. (182) Klehr describes those curious relationships that in some cases hint at Soviet interference in US elections.

David Karr’s life came to a mysterious end the night of 7 July 1979. His relations—one wife, three ex-wives, 5 children—had different opinions about the likely cause. Some thought it was a heart attack. His fourth wife suggested he was murdered by either the CIA, the KGB, Mossad, or the Mafia. (200) Klehr discusses all the options.

Those expecting *The Millionaire Was A Soviet Mole* to be a story of classic espionage for the KGB may be somewhat disappointed. Despite his links to the *Amerasia* case and other known clandestine KGB/NKVD agents, “he was not privy to American state secrets” and was no threat to the national security of the country. Klehr does establish Karr as an opportunistic, self-serving, KGB source and agent-of-influence. It was what he gleaned from bankers, businessmen, and politicians that interested the Soviets. (158) On this point, he sets the record straight.

***Nuking the Moon and Other Intelligence Schemes and Military Plots Left on the Drawing Board***, by Vince Houghton. (Penguin Books, 2019). 302 pages, source notes. — Reviewed by Robert W. Wallace

*Nuking the Moon* is fun to read, in part because most of what is described didn’t happen, at least not yet. Historian Vince Houghton has compiled an astonishing and potentially history-altering list of 21 projects involving cats, nukes, missiles, unconventional operations, weather modification, and planetary exploitation, all of which were terminated or failed, sort of.

At first look, the book appears to be a compilation of unrelated accounts of sometimes bizarre, top-secret government projects. Only at the conclusion does one sense that these are all woven together by three threads. First,

a green thread of dollars: governments fund crazy stuff with taxpayer money. Second a red thread of danger: fear and loathing of the enemy breeds extraordinarily destructive creativity. Third a silver thread of hope: in each of these instances, good judgment eventually prevailed.

“Serious” historians might find Houghton’s readable depictions of government-sponsored research with potentially existential consequences such as contaminating the moon with radioactive debris and melting cities by focusing the sun’s energy through gigantic, cosmic magnifying lens, too breezy, even cavalier. If so, the

source notes offer citations to official documents that provide supporting detail in full-throated governmentese.

Houghton concludes each chapter by asking “And then what?” and discussing the technical or scientific tail of the project. In doing so, he reminds us that all technol-

ogy, like books, has a first draft. Subsequent research and rewrites often lead to conclusions that neither the scientist nor the author envisioned. While no one nuked the moon in the 20th century, mankind’s imagination remains unrestrained for good—and otherwise.

## MEMOIR

**Gray Day: My Undercover Mission to Expose America’s First Cyberspy**, by Eric O’Neill. (Crown, 2019), 291 pp.  
—reviewed by J. E. Leonardson

One type of intelligence memoir involves books written by people with small amounts of experience or tangential connections to major cases that, in turn, they can use to advertise themselves as intelligence experts. *Gray Day*, an almost 300-page memoir by a minor figure in the FBI investigation of Robert Hanssen, falls squarely in this category. That’s a shame, because within this heavily-padded volume, a good short account struggles to get out.

Eric O’Neill was an FBI surveillance specialist who was tapped in December 2000 to work in the Hanssen investigation. This was in the late stages of the probe; Hanssen already had been identified as a Russian spy and would be arrested just two months later, in February 2001. In December, Hanssen had been given a new assignment and office in which he could be monitored. O’Neill was assigned work under Hanssen, with the job of watching his new boss. *Gray Day* is O’Neill’s account of his two months with Hanssen.

The book is at its best when O’Neill talks about Hanssen himself. He portrays Hanssen as a man who combined overbearing arrogance with a constant need to lecture and humiliate others, general unpleasantness, and—

perhaps because of the strain of his multiple lives—an explosive temper. Anyone who ever has had a bad boss can sympathize with O’Neill’s story of days filled with abuse from a man he knew to be a serial betrayer, and anyone who has had to work long, unpredictable hours will identify with O’Neill’s efforts to juggle work, law school classes, and an increasingly unhappy wife.

Unfortunately, O’Neill vastly overstates his own importance. He certainly made his contribution to the case but, contrary to the impression he gives, he was not a major character and did not provide the clinching evidence against Hanssen. Indeed, it was years of work by FBI agents and CIA officers that uncovered Hanssen and created the need for O’Neill’s role. Moreover, O’Neill pads the book with summaries (sometimes inaccurate) of well-known spy cases and a long final section on the threat of cyberespionage, against which it just so happens his company is prepared to offer its services.

A short book on what it is like to spend two months working with and watching a spy would have been a useful contribution to counterintelligence literature. Unfortunately, this overly long and self-important book is not it.

## INTELLIGENCE ABROAD

***Shadow Strike: Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power***, by Yaakov Katz. (St. Martin's Press, 2019) 306, endnotes, index.

In 1976, Iraq purchased a plutonium-producing nuclear reactor from France. In 1980, Iran attempted to destroy it but failed. Israel, convinced it was designed to make nuclear weapons, acted unilaterally and destroyed the reactor in an airstrike on 7 June 1981. The attack was widely and harshly criticized in the United States, the UN, and most nations. Israel acknowledged the operation, known as "Opera," and invoked the "Begin Doctrine," which proclaimed that military force would be used to prevent enemies from obtaining nuclear weapons. (12)

On 6 September 2007, a nuclear reactor under construction at al-Kibar in Syria was destroyed in an airstrike. Israel was responsible for this operation, too, but made no public announcement of its involvement, and this time there was no international outcry. *Shadow Strike* reveals the reasons for these differences and considers the long-term strategic implications of the raid.

According to author Yaakov Katz, former Harvard lecturer and current editor-in-chief of *The Jerusalem Post*, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert sent Mossad Director Meir Dagan to the United States in April 2007 to inform the White House that North Koreans were building the reactor in al-Kibar for Syria. Olmert then called President Bush and said, "George, I am asking you to bomb the compound." (47)

Katz explores a Mossad operation that convinced Olmert of Syria's intentions and the reasons for Olmert's request.

He then reviews the actions taken by the White House and the CIA to consider the implications for the United States and Bush's response. Of all the president's national security advisors, only Vice President Cheney thought the United States should bomb the reactor without warning. The alternative the president proposed to Olmert was to seek confirmation from the IAEA to verify al-Kibar as part of a nuclear weapons program and then notify Congress of the results. After receiving Bush's pledge of continued US secrecy, Olmert responded, "Then I will destroy the atomic reactor." (121). And that is what Israel did.

*Shadow Strike* describes the operational planning and the internal disputes that erupted as the risks were evaluated. Of particular interest is the concept of "the deniability zone" intended to give Syrian President Assad a basis for not retaliating and starting a war; it worked. (131, 241) Katz also considers how a strike might have affected Iran and, of more immediate concern, the North Korean reaction since US-North Korea negotiations were under way at the time. A year after the strike, although Congress was officially briefed on the operation, all other parties remained silent. Thus, North Korea was not punished for its violations of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

*Shadow Strike* is well documented with key points relying on interviews with high-level intelligence sources in several nations. The book shows how intelligence influences decisionmaking and operations. An absorbing read and a valuable contribution.



**Hayden Peake** has served in the CIA's Directorates of Operations and Science and Technology. He has been compiling and writing reviews for the "Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf" since December 2002.

**Robert W. Wallace** is a retired senior CIA officer and author. He is with H. Keith Melton, author of *Spycraft: The Secret History of the CIA's Spytechs, from Communism to Al-Qaeda* (Plume, 2009) and *The Official CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception* (HarperCollins, 2009).

**J. E. Leonardson** is the penname of a CIA officer.

