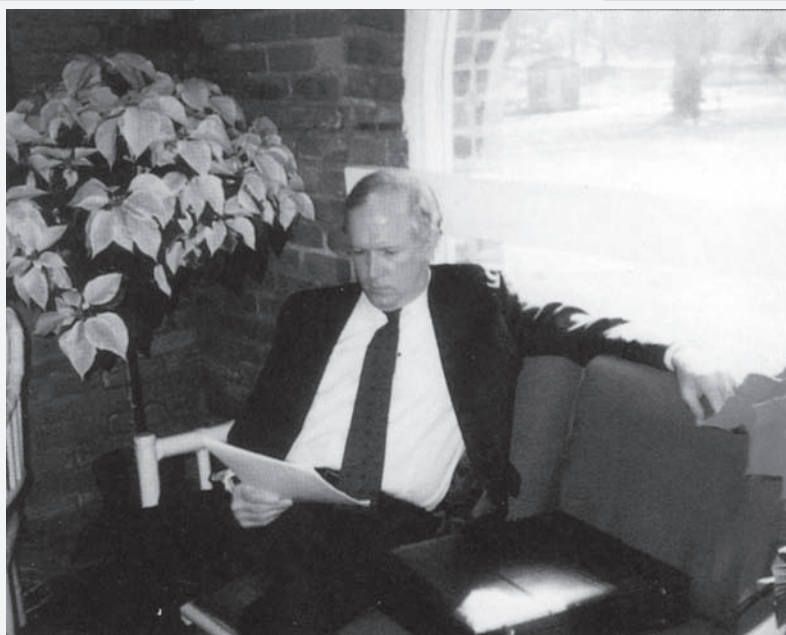


INTRODUCTION

It was President Harry Truman, in whose administration the Central Intelligence Agency and the postwar Intelligence Community (IC) were created, who instituted the custom of providing candidates for the presidency classified briefings on foreign developments. In 1952 he authorized the CIA to brief Gen. Dwight Eisenhower and Governor Adlai Stevenson so that the successful candidate would be as well informed as possible on the world situation when he took office. The briefings would also position the CIA to develop a close working relationship with the new president and his advisers. These two objectives have guided the efforts of the Agency and the IC during presidential transition periods ever since.

Thus it was, after Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton won the 1992 election, that CIA moved quickly to establish a presence in Little Rock to provide intelligence support to the new president-elect. As CIA's deputy director for intelligence, I was sent to meet with the governor and his staff to describe the materials the Agency proposed to make available and to elicit the governor's agreement to receive regular briefings from the CIA. Events unfolded in such a way that I became the head of a team that spent most of the period from November 1992 through January 1993 in Little Rock providing daily intelligence updates to the president-elect.

In keeping with President Truman's initiative, the Agency wanted to help the new president-elect prepare for his foreign policy responsibilities and acquaint him and his staff with IC's capabilities for collecting, analyzing, and delivering intelligence that would be vital to them when they took office. As we made arrangements for briefing Governor Clinton, we attempted to learn as much as possible from the Agency's experience in previous transition periods. What we discovered was that the CIA had provided pre-inaugural intelligence support to all eight presidents elected since the Agency was founded, but had no systematic records of those efforts. There was no body of organized information to indicate what had worked before and what had not. Such records and memories as we did have, however, made clear that we needed to make decisions quickly on how to proceed in a number of areas that would have an important bearing on whether we met our two primary goals.



Author John Helgerson reviews materials for his briefing of Governor Bill Clinton at the Arkansas governor's mansion. Helgerson was CIA's deputy director for intelligence at the time.

The key variables that seem to determine whether the IC is successful in serving a new president fall into four general categories. The first of these relates to the level and type of person or persons the Community puts forward to represent it. In some transitions the director of central intelligence (DCI), and now the director of national intelligence (DNI), has been personally and extensively involved; in others the DCI took no active role. Sometimes the IC has fielded very senior officers as its briefers but in other instances relied on much more junior representatives. When senior officers do the briefings they generally give the Community's product and approach greater credibility and access, but their selection also increases the likelihood that the exercise will be seen as political.

A second category of key variables concerns other political considerations to which the Intelligence Community must be sensitive to ensure that it and a new president come to work together well. Foremost among these is the background of the president-elect himself, particularly as it relates to his familiar-

ity with the IC and its products. It is quite a different matter, for example, to establish a relationship with an individual who has moved up from the vice presidency in the way that Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush did, as contrasted with individuals who have come to the position with no Washington experience in the manner of Presidents Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Similarly, the IC's experience has varied significantly depending on whether or not the new president has come from the same political party as his predecessor.

The DCI's or DNI's own political or career ambitions have sometimes raised delicate political problems. It is not unlikely, for example, that during a transition period the interests of the leader of the IC as an individual would not correspond with those of the IC itself. A most important political variable is the attitudes of the outgoing president and the national security advisor. Their support for the Community's efforts to establish an early and effective relationship with a new administration facilitates matters immensely.

The third group of key variables concerns logistic arrangements for the briefings. Should briefings be given prior to the election to both, or even multiple, candidates? Alternatively, should they be postponed until after the vote and provided exclusively to the single president-elect during the transition? How many briefings should be given and with what frequency? Experience shows that it matters, too, where the briefings are given and whether only the candidate is briefed or staff assistants are included as well.

Finally, concerning the substance of the information provided, there have been considerable variations in the amount and the type of material made available. All presidents-elect in recent years have valued receiving the *President's Daily Brief* (PDB), the intelligence summary created exclusively for the president. Some have wanted to receive additional, supplementary intelligence publications during the transition period. A few have wanted oral briefings by a number of substantive experts as opposed to hearing from a single Agency briefer each day; others have found multiple briefers confusing or overwhelming.

An important issue to be faced by the IC during each transition concerns how much information derived from sensitive human sources and technical collection efforts and regarding covert action programs should be included in the material given a president-elect, and when. Presidents in office are always informed of such programs, and careful attention is given to the timing, level of detail, and content of the presentation. And finally, concerning the substance of the support provided, there have been dramatic variations in the amount of tailored assistance the IC has provided presidents-elect and their national security teams to prepare them for pre-inaugural planning and policy

deliberations, speeches and press conferences, and, in particular, their meetings and communications with foreign statesmen.

Given the importance of these variables in determining whether the IC will come to work well with a new president during the transition period and beyond, it seemed desirable for the Community's own purposes to create a record of what we have done in the past, noting what has worked and what has not. Even a cursory examination of the IC's experience over the past half century reveals that it is often not intuitively obvious or self-evident what approaches will translate into success. In preparing this study I have been pleased to discover, or confirm, that certain of the intelligence briefings provided to incoming presidents have turned out to be of genuine and lasting historical importance in their own right. To use one example, the DCI and the CIA's deputy director for plans (operations) provided President-elect Kennedy information on the Agency's plans for what would become the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba. This occurred at a meeting with only the three of them present. A great deal of what has subsequently been written by others about what Kennedy was told, when he was told it, and what he said in response, is substantially wrong. I hope this account can clarify the circumstances of this and other important briefings provided to presidents over the years.

Finally, because the IC's role during transitions is unique, the Community seems to me to have an obligation to record what it has done and to make its account as widely available as possible. Perhaps this material will be of use not only to intelligence officers charged with meeting the Community's briefing responsibilities in the future, but also to others interested in IC contributions during these important chapters of our national history.

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