

Date: Wed, 28 Jul 2010 08:33:19 -0400

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge <[lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net](mailto:lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net)>

Subject: 137. The Washington Post series: The Relevance of Behavioral Science

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

I just wanted to be sure that you have been following both last week's Washington Post series, "Top Secret America," and the major followup (continuing) discussions on the Post's Website.

The series focuses attention on many of the issues that I have raised during the past year. Today, these behavioral science questions are beginning to define a policy agenda for lesson-drawing and learning. It will be helpful if you can make the connections explicit - for example by an Executive Summary/propositional inventory of key emerging policy concerns to highlight how the behavioral science literature suggests we should think about the issues.

The Washington Post story also illustrates how national policy is [still] made when we lack a rigorous, cumulative behavioral science field of national security studies. There are, once again, an abundance of impressions and sound-bite diagnoses and resurgent claims - e.g., that - this time - somebody [even tougher and more capable] should *really* be put in charge to rationalize the system. One-quarter of one percent of \$75 billion/year is \$160+ million/year which is a cornucopia for university-based, interdisciplinary, behavioral science studies - a world where, as you know, it has not been possible to sustain many career paths and cumulative research programs.

If you agree, I hope that you will make bold recommendations about what, in the best judgment of the National Academy and the experts on your panel, we should be doing as a nation.

A useful policy framework might be the Thinking in Time analysis from the earlier CIA/Harvard project: After 9/11 we did not know the scope and nature of the threats that we faced. It made sense to build capacities in many directions and try many things. Today, we know a great deal more about the nature of the threats. The question is not whether we "over-reacted" or did something wrong earlier, but what we should do next - e.g., rebalancing portfolios, scaling back some operations while retaining surge capacities, etc.

Some of the new recommendations could be well-focused about Top Secret topics and terrorism threats. Most of the productive ideas, I suspect, will involve thoughtful identification of areas for recapitalization/innovation and understanding the implications of the 10 to the 24th (Yottabyte) databases. Especially in areas of forecasting and the emerging field [memorandum # 4] of political opportunity analysis.

This could be one of the most exciting, relevant, and important Reports from the National Academy in recent years.

best wishes,  
Lloyd E.