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

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 209. Red Team: Jervis-theory Distortions in the Causal Maps
for President Obama?**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

A Red Team should evaluate whether the causal maps in the DNI briefings to President Obama partly misportray (as Jervis would predict) poor results as caused by the (unspecified) difficult and complex nature of the problems rather than as caused by attributes internal to the US government itself. There could be unrecognized management and implementation problems in President Obama's huge and inherited bureaucratic systems - among the largest in world history - that are poorly staffed for the jobs they are being given. The problem of a decade-long and fiercely expensive global war on terrorists (several thousand *jihadist* death cultists) may not solely be that they are resilient and adaptive.

A Red Team should review, challenge, and correct the DNI's paperflow to the President's desk and insure that President Obama is seeing the full causal equation that explains the slow implementation of what he wants.

The merit of a deeper, Jervis-theory, concern may be clearer if we look across cases:

Is President Obama Seeing the Full Picture?

There has been an astonishing range of important cases in which we discover that the federal government bureaucracies and agencies, once trusted, have been failing. We might attribute a single failure (like Hurricane Katrina) to President Bush and one deficient appointee, but we are observing implementation problems everywhere: Poor planning and management for post-

invasion Iraq [see also Harrington's Life in the Crystal Palace details, which probably were not in the DNI's *uber*-system reports to President Bush] <1>, Afghanistan after two years of the Obama Administration <2>, shocking and unsolved problems of humanitarian aid in Haiti, a bureaucracy's war on drugs that - now - has escalated to killing tens of thousands of people in Mexico without changing the problem in the US.

Or take the global financial system: A dozen or more federal agencies, including NSF and scientific agencies, were supposed to be in contact with reality and prevent us from awakening to discover, suddenly, that the worst global economic crisis since the Depression was upon us.

Are We Going in the Wrong Direction?

We may be going in the wrong direction. There is a growing, quiet concern in Washington that the quality of the (domestic and international) federal work force and its management structure has slowly declined across several decades. The concern is that - as one Assistant Secretary (who served in earlier administrations and then returned) put it: "There are fewer people you can assign projects to" [i.e., that require leadership, original thinking, and other skills.] The core problems may, in part, be generational: the highly capable people who responded to times of great idealism and challenge (e.g., the Great Society - or the Cold War) were retiring and the new federal work force was tenured, and locked-in for a career.

A counter-theory (to the theory that the large growth of the federal bureaucracy is justified) is that the federal system has been growing (at the top) because the mean capability at the lower levels has been declining. Thus, successive Administrations have been adding new, higher layers of (temporary and imported and highly capable) new people to get things done. Or they (responsibly) out-source but without reducing the federal work force. In this perspective, too, the creation of the DNI system - yet another layer on top - was a necessary short-term, emergency response. But the real solutions require that Presidents begin to have the causal maps that allow them to see why similar problems are observed across agencies and cases, in both domestic and international areas.

-The adaptations of the system also become dysfunctional because too many of the top people

are on overload, trying to do work that should be done lower in the system if the people were capable and trained and trusted to do it.

- By contrast, modern private corporations- using IT - often have downsized. <3> It may be healthier to rethink where, in the 21st century, we are going. A balanced, accurate causal map is a good first step.

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<1> I also attach, below, an article from the Financial Times by NATO's top intelligence officer in Afghanistan, about management problems that, after nine years, may never have been hinted-at in DNI paperflow to a President Bush.

<2> I forwarded to you (# 201 at www.policyscience.net at II. D) a copy of the AAA review of the Human Terrain System. It shows very capable and visionary people at the top are trying to accomplish important things in systems that, *de facto*, are not staffed and run to produce high performance results.

<3> President Obama may need more smart people at the front lines, in high performance teams, not in Washington - and fewer people in between.

US intelligence accused of 'cluelessness'

By Matthew Green in Islamabad. FT

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NATO's top intelligence officer in Afghanistan has issued a scathing critique of US military intelligence-gathering, warning that a failure to understand local communities has deprived commanders of the information needed to contain the Taliban.

Warning that the intelligence community was only "marginally relevant" to strategy, Major General Michael Flynn, a veteran US intelligence officer, depicted commanders safely cocooned in bases surrounded by analysts with only a hazy grasp of the concerns of the people the west had vowed to protect.

"Moving up through levels of hierarchy is normally a journey into greater degrees of cluelessness," wrote Maj Gen Flynn and his co-authors in a report released yesterday.

"US intelligence officers and analysts can do little but shrug in response to high-level decision-makers seeking the knowledge, analysis and information they need to wage a successful counterinsurgency."

He said analysts often felt their jobs were "more like fortune-telling than serious detective work".

The report will renew concerns over the capability of US intelligence, in the wake of a suicide attack that killed seven Central Intelligence Agency personnel in Afghanistan last week and the alleged attempt by a Nigerian student to blow up a US airliner over Detroit on Christmas day using an explosive hidden in his underwear.

Maj Gen Flynn used the report to issue a directive to international forces to undertake a rapid overhaul of the way information is gathered and processed within the US force and among its allies in Afghanistan.

The report was published as officials sought to ascertain how a Jordanian man reported to be an al-Qaeda double agent was last week able to infiltrate a military base in eastern Afghanistan last

week and inflict the biggest death toll on the CIA in one day in more than 25 years.

Commissioned by the Center for a New American Security, a US think-tank, before the latest incidents, the report focuses on the US military and civilian analysts employed by the department of defence.

Maj Gen Flynn's bleak assessment echoes a similarly blunt report that was prepared late last year by Stanley McChrystal, the commander of Nato forces in Afghanistan, who warned that the US risked losing the war without a change in strategy.

Maj Gen Flynn has worked closely with General McChrystal in various military missions during the past seven years and is considered to be one of his closest advisers.

The frankness of the report's language reflects the sense of urgency pervading the US command in a year that could prove decisive in the Obama administration's attempts to stave off defeat by the Taliban with efforts including a fresh troop surge.

Written in a tone nearing exasperation, the report quotes a US officer as saying: "I don't want to say we're clueless, but we are. We're no more than fingernail-deep in our understanding of the environment."

The report said intelligence officials and analysts were "ignorant of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations between various development projects and disengaged from people in the best position to find answers".

He was similarly candid about the lack of analytical skills in the military, quoting research showing that, in an intelligence staff of 250 people, only four or five personnel had the aptitude necessary to put pieces of information together to form a conclusion.

Maj Gen Flynn's report is a departure from the traditional approach to military intelligence as primarily a means to discern the intent of opposing forces, instead stressing the need for officers to understand the cultural and social complexities of their hosts.

For example, the report says that international forces who constructed a well were confronted by protests from local women angry that they had been deprived of a rare chance to socialise in their conservative village during their daily walk to draw water from a river.

Out-of-touch, complacent and cloaked in secrecy

For anyone working at a company burdened by out-of-touch leaders, complacent middle managers and a corrosive culture of secrecy, the report on the US intelligence community in Afghanistan will make for comforting reading.

In a 28-page dressing down, Michael Flynn, a US major general and long-serving intelligence officer, likens his operation to a corporation churning out goods without realising they are useless to consumers. "It is a culture that is strangely oblivious of how little its analytical products, as they now exist, actually influence commanders," he wrote.

Acknowledging the lack of trained information-sifters, a footnote suggests that the Department of Defense might consider hiring journalists to work as analysts.

He reserved greatest bile for officers who rely on sophisticated software to hide a lack of

understanding of Afghanistan's elusive realities. "Sufficient knowledge will not come from slides with little more text than a comic strip," Maj Gen Flynn wrote. "Commanders who think PowerPoint storyboards and colour-coded spreadsheets are adequate for describing the Afghan conflict and its complexities have some soul searching to do."

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[The Policy Sciences Center, Inc. is a public foundation that develops and integrates knowledge and practice to advance human dignity. Its headquarters are 127 Wall St., Room 322 PO Box 208215 in New Haven, CT 06520-8215. It may be contacted at the office of its Chair, Michael Reisman (michael.reisman@yale.edu), 203-432-1993. Further information about the Policy Sciences Center and its projects, Society, and journal is available at www.policysciences.org.]