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

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

**Subject: Quis custodiet . . . ? An Open, Science-Based, Future for National Intelligence? President Ford's Surprise**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff & Study Group Members:

**Before the System Solidifies Itself**

The National Academy of Sciences Report might want to include a relevant literature review of options and answers, from a social science perspective, to Juvenal's question: "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" Admiral Blair and President Obama have inherited a \$75 billion/year secret empire (if that is an acceptable term) with 200,000 employees. Before this national system solidifies itself, the National Academy of Sciences ought to provide an independent framework for thinking about system-design and behavioral/political issues.

**The National Academy's Report is a Political Document**

My own (scientist's) view is that government decisions usually will be wiser if they reflect, with integrity, the full range of disagreements about evidence and interpretation rather than a confident consensus that does not meet the test of scientifically verified knowledge.<1> Everybody should worry about what President Obama and our government's leaders are being told in secret by Admiral Blair and the new, secret empire that they have inherited. The world should worry, The President should worry. The President's National Security Adviser, General Jones, should worry. Admiral Blair himself and his senior staff should worry. And even if we reassure ourselves about President Obama, Admiral Blair, and a Democratic Administration, the wiser National Academy recommendation is to build a national/international system that is resilient about integrity and truth even when pressures from the top or a public/political mood are different.

- The design, location, control, and analysis/interpretation of databases is a political question <2>; and, more broadly it requires the National Academy of Sciences to bring social/political science and imagination to a question of statesmanship.

**Lessons from History: Secrecy Gives Power**

While Americans tend to have a self-congratulatory history of the Cold War, the arc of predictable argument and historiographic reinterpretation is just beginning. It will be worth providing institutional memory in the National Academy of Science Report - and perhaps the staff could assemble a list and appendix? - about *hubris* and what people

said, in secret and with access to secret information that could not be challenged during the Cold War:

Here is relevant testimony by a surprised Republican, former President Gerald Ford:

"In 1997 former President Gerald Ford addressed the National Press Club and reflected on the twelve years when he was a young member of the House Defense Appropriations Committee: "Every year before the Committee began hearings on putting together a defense bill, the members were briefed by the CIA. The director and his analysts 'were very prestigious, they were acknowledged to be the wisest, brightest people we had in government,' Ford recalled. 'They had charts on the wall, they had figures. And their conclusion was that in ten years, the United States would be behind the Soviet Union in military capability, in economic growth, in the strength of our economy. It was a scary presentation.' But as it turned out, they were wrong by 180 degrees. 'These were the best people we had, the CIA so-called experts,' Ford mused. 'How they could be so in error, I don't understand, but they were. . .'"

[Quoted in Moynihan, Secrecy: The American Experience (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 198-199.]

### **An Open, Science-Based Future for National Intelligence?**

The traditional "no disclosure of sources and methods" justifications for most national security secrecy do not apply in an age of Total Awareness via all electronic surveillance means. Encircled by 24x7 global surveillance satellites, total-acquisition capture on all forms of international and much domestic communications and financial data, massively-funded spying & bribery & code-breaking budgets from the US, UK, Israel, Russia, etc., any regime's estimate has to be: "They could have learned it in a lot of different ways, most of which we can't do anything about." There is a very small percentage of military information - which is not relevant to broad questions of public policy - about which our penetration and knowledge should not be disclosed. However the deciding question - whether, in the terms of Seitz et al., <3> "more might be gained than lost" - is whether the US government, based on what is now told to a President and other senior government officials in secret, is in touch with reality. Especially if we have \$75 billion/year to spend, it will be better to have multiple, independent sources of expertise and a science-based model in which the evidence and analysis from the N=200,000 system is available for public and independent scrutiny, whose results also can reach the President.

Yours truly,

Lloyd Etheredge

<1> If you do not know the answer, then a thoughtful politician might proceed differently. For example, it may be wiser to meet and negotiate a future politically rather than try to read a crystal ball.

<2> I raised these questions earlier (# 5) as a psychological issue of "groupthink" (Janis's phrase and diagnosis). However, more broadly, any grant of secrecy is a grant of power: For political scientists, the broader long-term concerns also are power, including who is drawn to join, compete, and achieve top office in large, secret and powerful bureaucratic empires, with access to secret information, and with privileged access to the President.

<3> Re institutional memory and cumulative scientific analysis and advice: It might be useful to include the thoughtful *Report* of the Defense Science Board (1970) chaired by Frederick Seitz. (Moynihan, pp. 175-176).

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