

Date: Fri, 04 Dec 2009 13:35:36 -0500

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy of Sciences Study on Social & Behavioral Science and Improving Intelligence for National Security" <baruch@cmu.edu>

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

## **Subject: A National Intelligence Ombudsman**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

I urge that the National Academy of Sciences review the social science literature about the design of Ombudsman systems. I suggest that you recommend a National Intelligence Ombudsman be added at the top of the DNI system.

The DNI mega-system was created to assure, institutionally, that a rational over-mind truly governed our national intelligence community. Part of Admiral Dennis Blair's responsibility is to assure that nothing important falls between the cracks or is ignored because a particular agency lacks personnel or resources or clear mandates of accountability. The National Intelligence Ombudsman is a fail-safe device - since it is realistic to forecast that the current DNI system will fail in ways that the DNI (even with the other forthcoming advice of your National Academy of Sciences project) cannot currently predict - and that it will be valuable, even if it will be less than 100% effective.

### **I. Active Solicitation**

Many Ombudsman systems are passive - they receive complaints. But a key and useful role for the National Intelligence Ombudsman would be to write, annually, to a range of selected people - perhaps all of the scientists who are members of AAAS, and all members of the National Academies, and all presenters of policy discussions carried on the new global policy colloquia channels - e.g., <http://uc.princeton.edu> and <http://www.kaisernetwork.org> - to ask, on behalf of the Obama Administration and the US government:

*"What are we missing?" "What needs more attention?" "Where are there gaps between what we should be doing and the well-informed US foreign policy plans that should be underway?" "Are there additional im-*

*portant and good things that can be happening in the world, where it is appropriate for the US government to help, and where an options paper by the DNI should go to President Obama?"*

David Brooks, in this morning's New York Times column, notes that, with the Obama Administration, the US government has become a "learning organization" [Finally!]. A National Intelligence Ombudsman will astonish a great many people - the DNI in the Bush Administration never would have written these letters and asked these questions. But I think a National Intelligence Ombudsman will be in keeping with what this President wants, and wants to know.

- It also might be astonishing to Admiral Blair to discover what he will learn. Especially if your design also adds ways for government professionals, themselves, to notify the DNI directly when they are not getting the resources that are needed for important lines of investigation; or when nobody is following-up on problems for which clear accountability needs to be assigned, etc.

Here are three quick examples of potential communications to a National Intelligence Ombudsman - a.) Ocean research/policy initiatives; b.) forecasts of youth unemployment trends that are likely to increase terrorism that have not been integrated into USAID and other strategic plans; c.) a cornucopia of creative ideas (requiring high-level institutional capacities for combinatorial thinking and political opportunity analysis) for rapid progress in global public health [e.g., leveraging new US domestic investments in electronic health records with genomic, protein, behavioral, environmental, etc. data] which the DNI system is not automatically recognizing in its analyses for the President.

## **II. Three Examples**

A. Oceans. The DNI's Global 2025 forecast omits any attention to oceans. However enough trouble is being caused by one key change in the atmosphere (mean temperature) and several key and worrisome changes are underway in the world's oceans, upon which many people (especially in other countries) depend for food. A National Intelligence Ombudsman might help to catch the omission and assure that the right analyses are being done quickly and that options for timely research and policy initiatives get to President Obama's desk. Jeremy Jackson's "The State of the Oceans" on <http://uc.princeton.edu> is a good overview of what was missing and what a good National Intelligence Ombudsman, soliciting advice from scientists, could have assured was being handled capably, even if it was not being

discussed in public in Global 2025.

B. Terrorism Forecasts and Integrated Plans for Youth Unemployment Initiatives in UDCs. The Global 2025 report's theories of future terrorism underscore the increase that America can expect due to growing "youth bulge" unemployment ["In those countries that are likely to struggle with youth bulges and weak economic underpinnings . . . [the radical trend] is likely to gain traction," p. 73). We ought to have a National Intelligence Ombudsman who could receive - and act on - observations that this analysis is not connected, bureaucratically and/or nationally, to USAID initiatives and other rational projects that will solve the long-term problem. . . . In the Bush Administration, the *lacunae* might not even have been mentioned by the bureaucracy - we don't have time, there's no money and there's never enough money and it's hopeless, we don't know how to solve the problem, it's not quite our responsibility, it's too big a problem. However it is the DNI's job to be sure that the dots are connected for rational long-term planning, and having a National Intelligence Ombudsman who is seen as interested to know about these rational planning *lacunae* could help. [For connections and an idea for a possible experiment - that may, now, only reach the DNI via your Report, see the earlier # 40 suggestion (the CCC model) on [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net)]

C. Strengthening DNI Capacities for Creativity/Combinatorial Thought and Political Opportunity Analysis. A third example is the emerging universe of opportunities for rapid progress concerning global health - also missing in the Global 2025 Report (November 2008). A National Intelligence Ombudsman would be somebody to whom you could write, and who could check whether someone in the bureaucracy - with clear accountability, competence, time and other resources, and authority - is handling this, and producing a paper flow, with well-staffed options, to the President. . . . It is possible, for example, that somebody on the NSC staff has this responsibility to do creative, visionary thinking about global health and about how all the new pieces and opportunities, in different domains, come together - but it nevertheless could be useful to have a National Intelligence Ombudsman to check this assumption with General Jones and the new staff. [I have uploaded six draft ideas for a Smart Global Health Policy Commission, at I.B. on <http://www.policyscience.net>, that illustrate the range of ideas and developments that you would want a good \$75 billion/year national intelligence system to assure are brought together automatically for President Obama's timely review.]

### III. Due Diligence: Algorithms & Resources

"This is Washington! There's always someone running around with their hair on fire about something!"

- Former Secretary John Lehman

Secretary Lehman was responding, as a member of the 9/11 Commission, to historical evidence of a Daily Intelligence Brief whose headline was: "Al-Qaeda Determined to Strike Within the United States."

It might be helpful to outline what a National Intelligence Ombudsman and his/her team is supposed to do, across a range of potential communications, from whom, about what? We know, for example, that when there are standard, due-diligence checklists (jointly certified by team members who are physically in communications with one another - airline cockpit personnel, high-performance surgery teams) that errors are reduced sharply. What, based on the current social science literature, can the National Academy of Sciences recommend to the DNI, and for the nation?

[You also might want to permit the National Intelligence Ombudsman, at his/her discretion, to insert items directly in the Daily Intelligence Brief to President Obama. Ideally, the option would not need to be exercised, but it would be useful to have in the background.]

Lloyd Etheredge

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Fellow. World Academy of Art & Science  
Director - Government Learning Project  
Policy Sciences Center Inc.  
127 Wall St., Room 322 - Box 208215  
New Haven, CT 06520-8215  
URL: [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net)  
301-365-5241 (v); [lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net](mailto:lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net) (email)