

Date: Tue, 08 Dec 2009 12:19:21 -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 Thought-Provocation Standard; The Daily Show v. the DNI; <100 al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, 300 in Pakistan.

Dear Dr. Fischhoff & Colleagues:

Would the National Academy of Sciences recommend that the DNI, to assist evidence-based/reality-connected thinking, include numbers in forecasts of national security threats?

- Also, it would be helpful for you to recommend a broader civic and honest-broker duty - that a National Intelligence Ombudsman could enforce - of public disclosure of important information that could provoke thought or public criticism and questioning of government policies and performance.

For example, yesterday Jon Stewart, the host of The Daily Show, asked Dan Rather about the estimate that there are < 100 al-Qaeda members remaining in Afghanistan. Dan Rather (who has just returned from Afghanistan) confirmed this.

[On Nov. 13, 2009 (submission # 26 on the www.policyscience.net Website) I forwarded a Washington Post story, quoting an anonymous source in military intelligence in Kabul, re the estimate of <100 al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and about 300 in the mountains of Pakistan.]

So far as I know, this anonymous source in Kabul is the only public disclosure of these numbers.

These numbers are important. They calibrate imaginations and raise legitimate questions. They can lead to smarter, more intelligent, and more cost-effective policies.

Yes, Valerie Plame was "outed" and her life was put at risk as a former CIA

Operations Officer, because of high-level political anger about her indirect and legitimate role in corrective news stories involved in the buildup to an invasion of Iraq. But we should be moving beyond the Bush-Cheney era of pressure to suppress truths that can lead to public criticism and questioning - and to evidence-based/reality-connected policy thinking. Forthright support of DNI professionalism by the National Academy of Sciences can help..

Lloyd Etheredge

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