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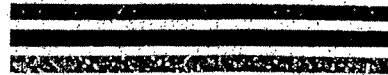
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*The Performance of the Intelligence Community
Before the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973:
A Preliminary Post-Mortem Report*

December 1973

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Following Review by the
United States Intelligence Board

Prepared by the
Intelligence Community Staff

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The overall classification and the classification of Section III of this document is as indicated on this page. The "Principal Conclusions and Recommendations" is ~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~ (LimDis), as are Sections I, II, IV, and V.

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**THE PERFORMANCE OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY
BEFORE THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF OCTOBER 1973:
A PRELIMINARY POST-MORTEM REPORT**

NOTE

This is the first of several reports concerning the activities of the Intelligence Community before and during the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973 which will be submitted to the NSCIC by the DCI or his representatives.* This particular study treats a broad variety of topics and examines a substantial number of problems. But it assesses the Community's activities only for that period which preceded the outbreak of war on 6 October, and is subject to the limits imposed by the press of time, the availability of data, and the recency of the events examined. Additional data and further consideration of it may yet yield new perceptions and amended judgments.

*For purposes of this paper, the term Community indicates those organizations which are represented at USIB and which are normally responsible for the collection of intelligence information and/or the production of finished intelligence, i.e., CIA, DIA, State/INR, and NSA.

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PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There was an intelligence failure in the weeks preceding the outbreak of war in the Middle East on 6 October. Those elements of the Intelligence Community responsible for the production of finished intelligence did not perceive the growing possibility of an Arab attack and thus did not warn of its imminence.

The information provided by those parts of the Community responsible for intelligence collection was sufficient to prompt such a warning. Such information (derived from both human and technical sources) was not conclusive but was plentiful, ominous, and often accurate.

2. Our post-mortem survey suggests that there were errors of evaluation among all producing offices. These can be attributed, in part, to attitudes and preconceptions lying behind the analysis, and also to various systemic problems affecting the analytical effort.

Certain substantive preconceptions, reinforced by official Israeli interpretations, turned the analyst's attention principally toward political indications that the Arabs were bent on finding non-violent means to achieve their objectives and away from indications (mainly military) to the contrary.

It is true, of course, that the analyst was faced with the tremendously demanding task of discriminating between the good and the bad in the flow of information crossing his desk. And the machinery of which he is a part did not always make his task any easier or provide him with systematic ways to challenge the quality of his own assessments.

3. We preliminarily recommend that: (a) efforts be made to further attune aspects of the collection system to the needs of the analytical systems; (b) regular systems be established to encourage analysts to exchange views and challenge consensus and to improve their ability to evaluate data; (c) the Community's warning system be revamped and the language of its issuances be designed to clearly reflect degrees of probability; (d) the Community consider the advisability of adopting a coherent national family of products for publication during periods of crisis; and (e) the Community provide for continuing assessments of the handling of intelligence during crises and potential crises. (These recommendations are given fuller treatment in Section V, p. 21 ff.)

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4. Finally, our preliminary post-mortem report has some implications for the general problem of resource allocation within the Community. If it is true in this instance that the collection effort was generally adequate but that our analytical effort was deficient, then a program to improve the latter will oblige us to try to augment the quantity, improve the environment, and add to the quality of the manpower which devotes itself to the production of finished intelligence. This in turn might require us to find additional resources, and these might have to be drawn in part from other areas of effort within the Community.

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I. KEY QUESTIONS

The performance of the Intelligence Community during the period preceding the outbreak of the recent war in the Middle East has been subjected to serious and persistent criticism. Specifically, it is charged that the Community: (1) misinterpreted the attitudes and motives of the Arabs toward each other, toward Israel, and toward the big powers; (2) misestimated both Arab and Israel military capabilities, inaccurately downgrading the former and excessively exalting the latter; (3) misread a series of political and military developments, particularly during the summer and fall; and (4) as a consequence of all this, misinterpreted Arab intentions in September and early October.

This paper addresses these charges. In the process, an effort is made to provide preliminary answers to several key questions:

A. Was there, in fact, an intelligence failure during the period leading up to the hostilities, and, if so, what was the nature of that failure? (This is addressed in Section II, THE COMMUNITY'S PERFORMANCE.)

B. As background and documentation for A. (above), what information, specifically, did the various intelligence agencies receive (from various collection efforts) and what, specifically, did they produce as finished, analytical intelligence during the period in question? (Section III, THE COLLECTION EFFORT.)

C. If the notion of failure is indeed substantiated in the preceding sections, the question then must be, essentially, what happened? What, in other words, were the principal reasons for the failure, as best we can identify at this early date? (Section IV, THE ANALYTICAL EFFORT.)

D. Again assuming serious shortcomings in the Community's performance, can we identify some possible remedies and in this way help to avoid similar problems in the future? (Section V, PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS.)

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II. THE COMMUNITY'S PERFORMANCE

The problem of whether there was or was not an intelligence "failure" concerning the Middle East in 1973 can be subdivided into three primary questions:

(1) Were intelligence analysts given enough information in time to conclude (before 6 October) that the possibility of war was sufficiently serious to justify some form of warning to intelligence consumers? *Yes, Community analysts were provided with a plenitude of information which should have suggested, at a minimum, that they take very seriously the threat of war in the near term.* Though not conclusive, and though much of it could be explained away as signifying a rehearsal rather than the main event, data from a variety of sources indicated in September that something very big was brewing in both Egypt and Syria. (See the discussion of the Collection Effort in Section III.) This, together with a general awareness (confirmed again in the spring of this year) that Sadat wished to keep his military options open, should have led the analysts to assign far more weight to the possibility that Sadat's intentions were hostile.

(2) Assuming that the information made available to them did indeed seem to warrant or demand such forewarning, did the analysts in fact effectively utilize it? *No, as indicated, the assessments which appeared in various intelligence periodicals, spot reports, and memoranda, did not sufficiently utilize the information available and consequently did not provide a warning of impending hostilities.* A thorough search of the material issued prior to 6 October has failed to turn up any official statement from any office or committee responsible for producing finished, analytical intelligence which contributed anything resembling a warning, qua warning.

There was some rather timid cautionary advice, of the sort, emphasized below, in quotations from two assessments:

"We continue to believe that an outbreak of major Arab-Israeli hostilities remains unlikely for the immediate future, although the risk of localized fighting has increased slightly as the result of the buildup of Syrian forces in the vicinity of the Golan Heights. Egyptian exercise activity under way since late September may also contribute to the possibility of incidents."

—Combined Watch Report of the USIB, No. 1206, 4 October 1973.

"There are reports that Syria is preparing for an attack on Israel but conclusive evidence is lacking. In our view, the political climate in the Arab states argues against a major Syrian military move against

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Israel at this time. *The possibility of a more limited Syrian strike—perhaps one designed to retaliate for the pounding the Syrian Air Force took from the Israelis on September 13—cannot, of course, be excluded.*

—INR Memorandum to the Secretary, 30 September 1973.

But these qualifications deal only with the possibility of small-scale military actions. They thus could not have served as warnings of major hostilities even had they been far less diffident than they in fact were.

(3) If analysts did not provide forewarning, what did they offer in its stead? *Instead of warnings, the Community's analytical effort in effect produced reassurances.* That is to say, the analysts, in reacting to indicators which could be interpreted in themselves as portents of hostile Arab actions against Israel, sought in effect to reassure their audience that the Arabs would not resort to war, at least not deliberately. Thus:

"Syria-Egypt - The movement of Syrian troops and Egyptian military readiness are considered to be coincidental and not designed to lead to major hostilities."

—DIA Intelligence Summary, 3 October 1973.

"Egypt - The exercise and alert activities under way in Egypt may be on a somewhat larger scale and more realistic than previous exercises, but they do not appear to be preparing for a military offensive against Israel."

—Central Intelligence Bulletin, 5 October 1973.

"Egypt - The current, large-scale mobilization exercise may be an effort to soothe internal problems as much as to improve military capabilities. Mobilization of some personnel, increased readiness of isolated units, and greater communication security are all assessed as parts of the exercise routine....there are still no military or political indicators of Egyptian intentions or preparations to resume hostilities with Israel."

—DIA Intelligence Summary, 6 October 1973.

"Israel-Egypt-Syria - Both the Israelis and the Arabs are becoming increasingly concerned about the military activities of the other, although neither side appears to be bent on initiating hostilities....For Egypt a military initiative makes little sense at this critical juncture....Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat's painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run

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counter to his current efforts to build a united Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states. For the normally cautious Syrian president, a military adventure now would be suicidal, and he has said so."

-Central Intelligence Bulletin, 6 October 1973.

"The Watch Committee met in special session at 0900 on 6 October 1973 to consider the outbreak of Israeli-Arab hostilities.... We can find no hard evidence of a major, coordinated Egyptian/Syrian offensive across the Canal and in the Golan Heights area. Rather, the weight of evidence indicates an action-reaction situation where a series of responses by each side to perceived threats created an increasingly dangerous potential for confrontation. The current hostilities are apparently a result of that situation....It is possible that the Egyptians or Syrians, particularly the latter, may have been preparing a raid or other small-scale action."

-Special Report of the Watch Committee, 6 October 1973.

There were many reasons why the intelligence analysis which reached the consumers conveyed these essentially reassuring messages, not all of them good. But surely it will be recalled, as analytical shortcomings are identified in this paper, that the hindsight of the post-mortem process bestows an element of wisdom which is denied those--in this instance intelligence analysts--who must deal in foresight. Indeed, what may seem so clear now did not, could not, seem so clear then.

Still, there is no gainsaying the judgment that, whatever the rationale, the principal conclusions concerning the imminence of hostilities reached and reiterated by those responsible for intelligence analysis were--quite simply, obviously, and starkly--wrong.

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III. THE COLLECTION EFFORT

In intelligence jargon, the principal categories of the effort to obtain (collect) information are HUMINT (human sources: clandestine, military, and diplomatic), SIGINT (encompassing communications [COMINT] and electronic intelligence [ELINT]), and PHOTINT (including satellite photography). A post-mortem survey of collection activities in these three areas of acquisition during the crisis period reveals that there were problems which were peculiar to each country involved, and which in the aggregate affected the quality, dissemination, and ultimate value of the data collected. But there were no major weaknesses or uncompensated omissions in the overall effort. In particular, information concerning, for example, the kinds and numbers of weapons in the Arab inventory was adequate (though the effectiveness of some Soviet weapons—e.g., the SA-6, which had not previously been observed in combat—came as something of a surprise).

[REDACTED] Some HUMINT too should be counted as quite good, [REDACTED]

Intelligence From Human Sources

Specifically concerning clandestine reporting, it is apparent (at least in retrospect) that [REDACTED] in late September gave a clear indication of impending hostilities.

[REDACTED] Syrian Army units are expected to be in position by the end of September. [REDACTED]

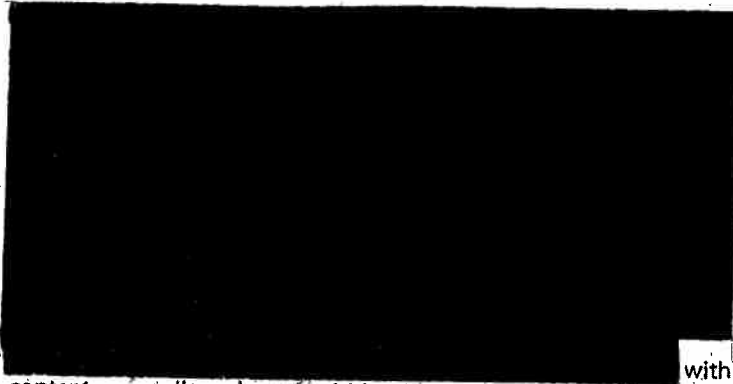
[REDACTED] Missiles and antiaircraft units are deployed close to the front lines to support the attack at zero hour.

[REDACTED] Cities, particularly Damascus, are in the process of taking all possible civil defense precautions.

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Copies [redacted] with similar content were disseminated within the Community in May, June, September and early October and were sent to appropriate diplomatic and military addressees in the field and to the NSC Staff. They also reached officials at high policy levels whose concern and interest were aroused sufficiently at any rate to prompt requests for immediate assessments of the material by analysts in the Community.

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Two clandestine reports which suggested that Syrian military movements were defensive in nature, [redacted] were disseminated in early October. This opinion contradicted what purported to be fact in the other reports (we now believe that the other reports were indeed substantially factual*) and the contradiction (which may have been inspired by Syrian "misinformants") seems to have reinforced the conviction of many analysts that the reported Syrian attack plans were merely "visionary."

Certainly few intelligence analysts seemed prepared to believe the contents and implications of the reports on Syrian attack plans. This was partly so because there was an element of "cry wolf" in them (the imminency of a Syrian attack on Israel has been repeatedly reported since May), partly because there was contradictory reporting from clandestine and other sources, partly because the political climate did not seem warlike, and partly for reasons (e.g., the predispositions of the analysts themselves) which are discussed in a later section of this paper (in Section III).

*Studies seeking to compare the [redacted] contained in these reports with the actual attack mounted on 6 October are in progress. So far, the accuracy of the report seems to have been basically confirmed.

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Clear in hindsight, but not apparent to analysts at the time, is a pattern in the development of the Syrian war plan. Over time [REDACTED]

the Syrian plan evolved and revealed an increasing degree of precision concerning order of battle, movements, axes of attack, locations of forces, etc.--a degree of precision never before detected in any previous "exercise" or "defense deployment." Moreover, analysts failed to take account of ample earlier evidence of a coordinated Egyptian-Syrian plan.

Clandestine reporting from and concerning other areas in the Middle East during 1973 was more equivocal. Except for a large volume of reports [REDACTED] suggesting the likelihood of war in the spring, the reporting was not very extensive in any case.

During June, July, August, and early September, most of the reporting from CIA, US diplomatic posts, and the offices of the US Defense Attaches in the Middle East tended to support the analysts' belief that various political developments in the area militated against the outbreak of war.* (In contrast, most of the reporting from these sources during the spring had tended in one way or another to reinforce the supposition that President Sadat was at that time seriously considering war.) There were few if any real substantive disagreements in the reports from State and Defense Attache officers, and this was also generally true of CIA reports [REDACTED]

All US human collection efforts of course suffered from difficult or peculiar operational environments, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In some instances, HUMINT also suffered from the need to depend to a very large degree on [REDACTED]

Reports from official Israeli sources through US liaison channels were nearly unanimous in their judgment that war was unlikely. An assessment provided by the Israeli foreign ministry officer in charge of Middle East

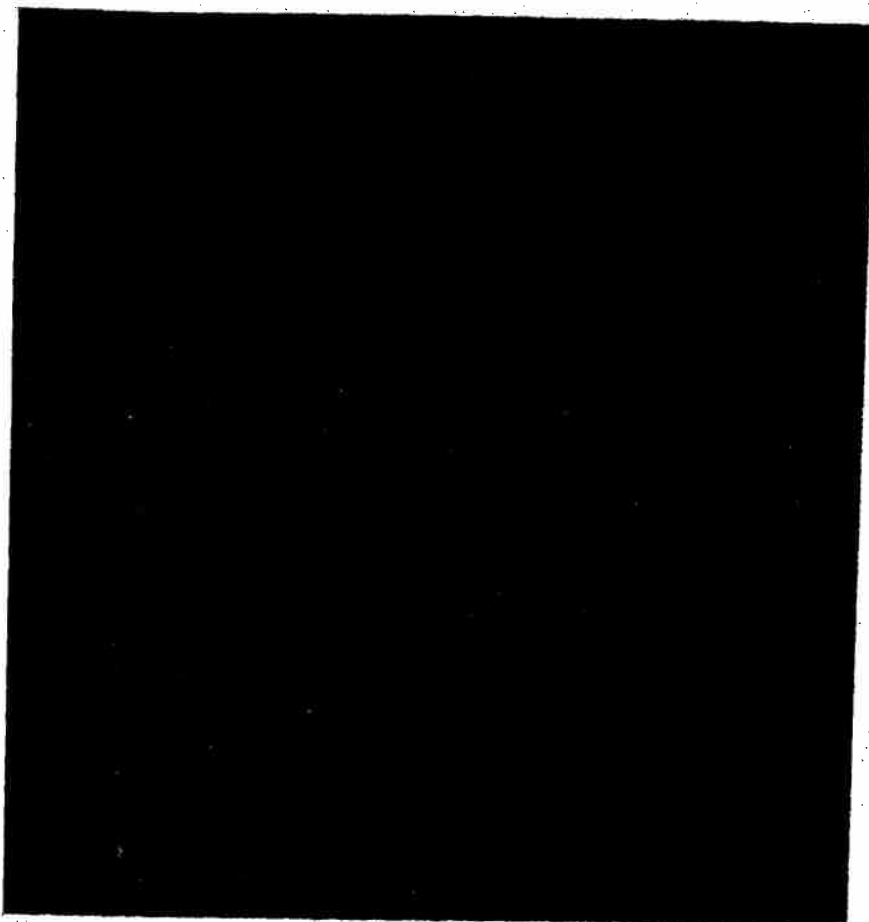
*Among these were, as interpreted by the analysts, Egypt's improving relations with Saudi Arabia, the signs related to the growing viability of oil as a political weapon, Egyptian and Syrian suspicions of Soviet motives toward the Arab world in light of US-USSR detente, etc.

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affairs on 3 October, for example, concluded that Arab military movements were routine and that "the voice of reason" would prevail in Damascus. The Israelis apparently remained relatively relaxed about the possibility of war until the evening of 5 October.

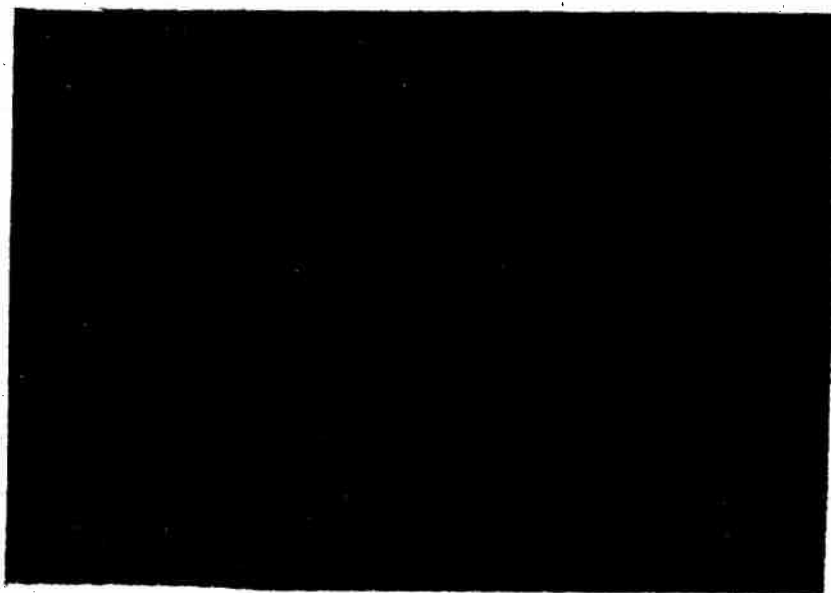
SIGINT



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Two particular problems associated with SIGINT should be mentioned here:



Moreover, partly because of the requirements levied on it by a wide variety of consumers, NSA issues most SIGINT reports [redacted] in very technical language; SIGINT can thus challenge the ingenuity of even the most experienced, all-source analyst searching for meaning and patterns in a mountain of material.

Photographic Intelligence

PHOTINT contributed to the collection effort by providing order of battle information and hard confirmatory evidence of indications of military activities obtained through other [redacted] sources.

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From as early as mid-summer PHOTINT identified or confirmed numerous indicators of an Arab military buildup near the Golan Heights and along the west bank of the Suez Canal. By mid-June overhead photography had recorded the movement of sizeable Egyptian armored units into new positions near the Canal. The Syrian buildup in the Golan Heights was confirmed in mid-September when examination of photography revealed an increase in Syrian tank strength and five additional occupied SA-6 sites (bringing the total to 15). And air defense systems alluded to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] were subsequently located by photography; indications that SA-6s had been moved near the Suez Canal, for example, were confirmed on 7 August.

[REDACTED]

The information from this mission did not significantly influence pre-hostilities intelligence assessments. This may have been in part because war broke out so soon after the completion of the mission and the initial dissemination of its results. But more important, Egyptian armed forces apparently did not begin final preparations for the attack until approximately 26 September, one day after the mission ended. Moreover, many Syrian troop movements reported by other sources to be under way in September could not be confirmed by the photography because of the poor interpretability of some of the film. (And those movements which could be confirmed were thought to be wholly consistent with the then current judgment that the Syrians were conducting a training exercise.)

[REDACTED]

A different ordering of schedules and priorities for satellite missions over the Middle East and for the exploitation of film would no doubt have provided the Community with additional useful information. But whether it would have provided it with good reason to issue a clear warning of imminent hostilities is moot. It cannot be determined what additional

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information would have (as opposed to might have) been obtained by such a reordering, nor can it be established precisely what would have convinced analysts in the production agencies (who were highly skeptical of any information which indicated the imminence of hostilities) that a warning estimate was mandatory. In any event, it is likely that a major reordering of schedules and priorities would have first required a sense of urgency on the part of analysts and managers which simply did not exist, either before [redacted] was launched or while it was still aloft.

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IV. THE ANALYTICAL EFFORT

Attitudes Behind the Analysis

The Legacy of History

It is true that intervals of peace have occurred from time to time in the tortured relationship between Arab and Israeli, but these have regularly been marred over the past quarter of a century by military incidents and harassments, displays of strength, and menacing rhetoric. Thus the Middle East analyst--in or out of government service--has long since become accustomed to a precarious state of affairs between Arab and Israeli. He has for some time lived with, and has more or less calmly adjusted to, the notion that war could resume at almost any time and that eventually it almost certainly will. And because of the frequency of one or another variety of threats of war, especially from the Arab side, the expert has had to learn to discount most indications of hostile intent.

There is then a Cry Wolf factor at work here: the seasoned analyst has been provoked too many times by alarms which seem to others to signal particular peril but which, more often than not in the past, have subsequently proved false. A senior officer in one of the Community's production offices put it this way:

"Some analysts who are not real Middle Eastern experts had a greater sense of danger than those who are; the experts fell victim to a trap, ignoring the simplistic and obvious (e.g., SIGINT) indicators."

Some very specific aspects of the Cry Wolf problem are clearly apparent in published intelligence assessments. They have also been cited by analysts who have sought to explain the analytical problems they faced in the pre-hostility period. For example:

"For several years we have watched training (by small units almost exclusively) in water crossing operations and in the negotiating of tank barriers, such as those along the eastern edge of the Golan Heights. Both Syrian and Egyptian forces had been deployed in great strength in areas contiguous to the cease-fire lines for at least three years with artillery emplaced well forward in what at first observation would be described as an offensive posture. Exercises of many types have taken place periodically and readiness postures have been raised frequently during times of tension and during periods when Israeli forces were active in field training

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exercises. The posture of the Egyptian and Syrian forces was one of defense but one which could become offensive almost as quickly as the decision to do so could be made. Troop movements, exercises, and armed clashes have taken place on many occasions since 1967 in an environment of belligerent rhetoric without leading to actual acts of war."

And, from another source:

"We looked at military activity as it fit into the political picture and did not also see it by itself. We eventually were forced to make military information fit into the political puzzle, even when the pieces didn't fit very well at all."

The Impact of Preconceptions

The latter view (above) identifies another significant element which influenced, indeed led astray, pre-war evaluations of Arab intentions, viz, the power of preconceptions. The relevant quote here is from an authority, whose observations, if themselves perhaps preconceived, are also at least well-conceived:

"There are always two aspects to intelligence. One is a determination of the facts; the other is the interpretation of these facts. And there is the tendency of most intelligence services...to fit the facts into existing preconceptions and to make them consistent with what is anticipated. And if you start from the assumption that a war is probably unlikely--if you know that there have been Egyptian maneuvers every September over the last ten years--then there is probably a tendency to make observed facts fit your preconceived theories. This is one of the gravest dangers of all intelligence assessments. And facts are much easier to come by than intentions."*

No preconceptions seem to have had a greater impact on analytical attitudes than those concerning relative Arab and Israeli military prowess. The June War was frequently invoked by analysts as proof of fundamental and perhaps permanent weaknesses in the Arab forces and, inferentially, of Israeli invincibility. The Arabs, despite the continuing acquisition of modern

*Secretary Kissinger, 12 October 1973.

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weapons from the Russians, remained about as far behind the Israelis as ever: "Israel superiority in such factors as technical competence, morale, leadership and the like offsets the Egyptians (or all Arab) superiority in quantities of men and equipment." (From the joint CIA-DIA-INR Arab-Israeli Handbook, July 1973). Moreover, from the same source, an unusually flat assertion (to be proved wrong within three months): "...the (Egyptian) ground forces are (not) capable of a multi-divisional operational assault across the Canal." And, again from the same source: "...the recent introduction of new (Soviet) air defense, naval, and ground force materiel (including SA-6s and SA-7s) has not significantly increased Syria's military potential."

There was, in addition, a fairly widespread notion based largely (though perhaps not entirely) on past performances that many Arabs, as Arabs, simply weren't up to the demands of modern warfare and that they lacked understanding, motivation, and probably in some cases courage as well. These judgments were often alluded to in conversations between analysts and were reflected somewhat euphemistically in published statements such as the following:

"A fundamental weakness of the Egyptian army continues to be the quality of Arab manpower...the average conscript lacks the necessary physical and cultural qualities for performing effective military services....In the field the troops have little motivation and tend to approach difficult situations with a fatalistic attitude."
 —CIA UAR Handbook, July 1971.

There is of course no disputing the validity of the Community's basic judgment that the Israelis retained military superiority. This, we believe, was about to be demonstrated once again, dramatically so, on the west bank of the Suez Canal when the cease-fire actually went into effect on 24 October. Moreover, implicit in the low judgment of Arab capabilities vs. Israeli capabilities was the strongly held view that the Israelis would not be caught by surprise and be so unprepared in the event of an Arab attack. But the successful crossing of the Canal by major Egyptian forces, the establishing of a substantial bridgehead on the east bank, and the initial successes of Syrian forces in the Golan Heights, all came as a surprise to the Community (and many others). So too did the slow-reaction time of the Israeli forces and the magnitude of Israeli losses.

There is no question that the effect of errors of judgment concerning Arab military capabilities on the Community's political estimates was significant. It is clear, for example, in the following statement of an analyst seeking to identify the reasons for his and others' misinterpretations of events:

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"A second element in our estimate was the degree of deterrence afforded by Israeli military superiority. The results of the 1948, 1956, and 1967 Arab-Israeli fighting and the 1969-70 war of attrition clearly established that Arab troops were no match for Israel, that the Arabs knew it, and that an Arab decision to go to war, though it could never be ruled out, would be a desperate emotional and/or irrational act."

The implication of this view was apparent in intelligence publications throughout the summer of 1973 and into October itself: if resorting to war would be an irrational act for, say, Sadat, then--since Sadat is a rational man--he would try to find other, non-military ways to achieve his objectives. Thus, succinctly:

"The whole thrust of President Sadat's activities since last spring has been in the direction of bringing moral, political, and economic force to bear on Israel in tacit acknowledgment of Arab unreadiness to make war."

—CIA Assessment of Purported Syrian Military Preparations, Memorandum for the Secretary of State, 30 September 1973.

A Case of Wisdom Lost

But in hindsight it is clear that a vital element was missing from this calculus, i.e., the estimate that--at least so long as Sadat seemed to have political alternatives--Arab military weakness would probably preclude war. What was missing here, but which had been firmly in view during the spring, was the estimate that the question of Arab military capabilities might have little bearing on the issue of whether or not the Arabs would actually go to war; Sadat and Asad might make the decision to go to war with little or no consideration of the chances of a disastrous military outcome.

Community analysts agreed in the spring (in NIE 30-73, "Possible Egyptian-Israeli Hostilities," 17 May 1973), for example, that a continuing diplomatic stalemate would tend to precipitate hostilities if Sadat (despite his awareness of Egypt's military weakness) concluded that this "would stimulate more active US and Soviet involvement in the settlement process." In other words, an Egyptian (and Arab) decision to resort to war--quite limited war in the view of the NIE--did not rest at all on an assessment of the prospects (dismal) for Arab military success. On the contrary, rational men like Sadat and Asad might make such a decision in full anticipation of defeat on the battlefield, but with hope for a victory at the conference table.

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The NIE did not say that it was likely that Arab considerations of this character would in fact lead to war. It estimated, correctly, that "substantial Egyptian-Israeli hostilities appear unlikely in the next few weeks" (and this responded directly to the principal question raised by the requester of the Estimate). But it also stated that, though the danger of war would "probably rise if UN debates and the US-Soviet summit pass without any results judged useful by Cairo, this does not mean that hostilities will then become inevitable or even probable."

There was no published dissent to that judgment in the NIE. But within two weeks of the NIE's issuance, INR analysts recorded their disagreement in an Information Memorandum addressed to the Secretary:

"INR is inclined to state the case on the risk of hostilities for a political purpose with a little more urgency (than the NIE). If the UN debate of next week produces no convincing movement in the Israeli-Egyptian impasse, our view is that the resumption of hostilities by autumn will become a better than even bet...."

This remarkable memorandum then argued the case on wholly political grounds:

"Sadat's national security adviser...has recently been saying... that the no-war, no-peace situation is more dangerous for the future of Egypt than war itself...(and this) probably accurately stated Sadat's feeling...Sadat has long preferred a political settlement to renewed combat...(but) mounting evidence indicates that he is becoming ever more strongly tempted to resort to arms...."

"Although he has no illusions that Egypt can defeat Israel militarily, he seems on the verge of concluding that only limited hostilities against Israel stand any real chance of breaking the negotiating stalemate by forcing the big powers to intervene with an imposed solution. Should he shed his last doubts about whether military action is essential to achieve this American shift, the only remaining decision would relate to the timing and scope of his move...."

"It is not very relevant to weigh the credibility of any particular military scenario. From Sadat's point of view, the overriding desideratum is some form of military action which can be sustained long enough, despite Israel's counterattacks, both to activate Washington and Moscow and to galvanize the other Arab states, especially the major oil producers, into anti-American moves." (Paraphrasing and underscoring ours.)

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Lamentably, as the summer wore on, analysts seemed to lose sight of this wisdom. They became convinced that King Faysal, in league with Sadat, was determined to use the oil weapon in peacetime to pressure the US into making Israel withdraw from occupied territories, that this was seen by the Arabs as a viable option, and that therefore Arab military action was not necessary. This despite the Arab's continuing apprehensions about the results of the US-Soviet summit, their sustained disappointment with US actions and policies, and their unrelieved frustration about the impasse at the UN--all matters which the NIE had suggested Sadat would find "intolerable."

It is probably true that for a time last summer the Arab leaders would have welcomed acceptable non-military means to achieve their objectives, and that they made some effort to find such means. But none of this precluded a simultaneous effort to plan seriously for military "solutions" which would be implemented if "peaceful" approaches failed. Nor--as the May INR memorandum pointed out--would the Arabs' fears of military inadequacy necessarily determine their course of action. But in late September and early October, the analysts were examining events as they happened and did not review or consciously recall this wise counsel from the previous spring.

Precisely when and why Sadat and Asad decided to embark on hostilities (essentially for the reasons adduced in the INR memorandum) remain questions for which there are no factual answers. There is, however, reporting to the effect that the Israeli shootdown of 13 Syrian MIGs on 13 September was the last straw and led to Sadat's and Asad's subsequent decision to attack when the circumstances seemed propitious.

Other Elements of the Problem

The Israeli Factor

Inevitably, in the period leading up to hostilities, the Community relied heavily on information and assessments received through various liaison channels from the Israelis. As previously indicated, this material--which in the past had contributed significantly to accurate US analytical judgments--was in this instance highly misleading. If anything, the Israeli attitude concerning the likelihood of war was more relaxed than that of Community analysts. This, inevitably strengthened convictions in Washington that there was little prospect of war. Still, it was a virtually unanimous opinion among those polled by the post-mortem team that the Community, while influenced in this way, did not rely on Israeli intelligence or on Israeli assessments for its estimates of Arab intentions.

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Reinforcing Consensus and Other Analytical Problems

Though difficult to document, it seems almost certain that one aspect of the analytical problem during the Middle East crisis was related to a process which may be called the reinforcing consensus. This phenomenon takes place when the divergent views of individual analysts are submerged in a sea of conventional collective wisdom. Tentative judgments (e.g., concerning the nonlikelihood of war) can become near certitudes, distinctions between degrees of probability can become lost, and doubts or disagreements can simply disappear in the face of mutually reinforcing agreements.

There is some preliminary evidence that this process was at work in the Watch Committee process in early October and resulted in a progressive watering down of initial expressions of concern.

There is also reason to believe that some analysts participating in the coordination of the previously cited NIE 30-73 might have dissented from the judgment that war was not probable in the autumn had it not been for the effects of a reinforcing consensus.*

The problem of incremental analysis—especially as it applies to the current intelligence process—was also at work in the period preceding hostilities. Analysts, according to their own accounts, were often proceeding on the basis of the day's take, hastily comparing it with material received the previous day. They then produced in "assembly line fashion," items which may have reflected preceptive intuition but which perforce lacked whatever benefits might have accrued from a systematic consideration of an accumulated body of integrated evidence.

Divisions of labor within the Community and within individual agencies may have contributed to this problem. Separate groups of analysts may examine different aspects of the same substantive problem, with little time or opportunity to review one another's product and to integrate subsequent analysis.

**These analysts remember feeling uncomfortable when they took the only "hawkish" position around the table. Moreover, when challenged at the table on minor points, they were sometimes unable to sustain these and as a result their overall position was weakened. One of these minor points, they recall, had to do with domestic pressure on Sadat to resolve the diplomatic impasse. They felt Sadat was under increasing pressure but could not name specific individuals applying the pressure.*

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The lack of an integrated systematic approach to warning problems may also have had an unfortunate effect on the analytical product. To oversimplify somewhat, analysts, in reacting against certain indicators, tended to conceive of the problem in terms of "war" vs. "no war" rather than in terms of the "likelihood" of war. There seemed to be no system designed to encourage the analysts who were evaluating the crisis to ponder events and indicators in the light of the warning function and the need for judgments of probabilities.

The Coordination Aspect

The coordination procedures which are followed by the Community during normal times are frequently abandoned during times of crisis—because the press of time may simply not allow regular processes to continue. It thus has been said that the Community is pretty good about coordinating, except when the intelligence really becomes important. And, in a way, this did indeed happen immediately before and during the October war in the Middle East. Coordination of the Central Intelligence Bulletin, for example, was suspended for a time, and the wartime Situation Reports and Spot Reports prepared by CIA, DIA, and INR were unilateral and often duplicative issuances. This, if not a major problem for the analysts themselves, was certainly one for the consumers (and is addressed in that light in our recommendations).

Source Reliability, Deception, and Noise

Even in the best of circumstances, the intelligence analyst is faced with the demanding task of discriminating between materials of no interest or value (noise) and those of potential significance. Three problems makes this normally difficult undertaking even more so during crises.

(1) The flow of information increases substantially as a crisis develops and as demands on the analyst's time from other quarters also grow.

(2) Some of the potentially most important material poses especially taxing problems. In the case of SIGINT, as previously indicated, there are difficulties associated with interpreting ██████████ of esoteric material. In the case of HUMINT, especially from clandestine sources, there is the problem of evaluating the reliability of sources and of reports of potentially critical importance on the basis of information deliberately kept cryptic for reasons of security.

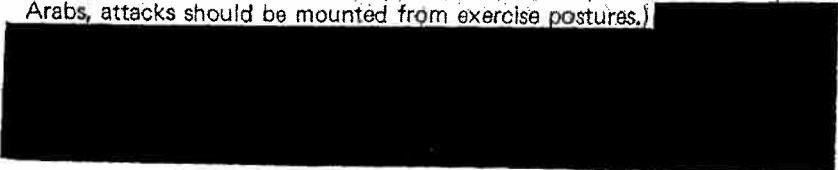
(3) There is also the problem of deception. In this instance there is little question that the Arabs in fact practiced various forms of deception before the attack. Most apparent in hindsight were the efforts of both Egypt

E.O. 12958, as amended
Section 3.3(b)(1)

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and Syria to prepare for the assault in a manner consistent with previous training exercises. (In Soviet doctrine, apparently adopted in this case by the Arabs, attacks should be mounted from exercise postures.)



E.O. 12958, as amended
Section 3.3(b)(1)

Resource Issues

Post-mortem interviews revealed a concern among some analysts that the manpower and resources of their respective agencies were insufficiently committed to the analytical effort in general and to Arab-Israeli aspects of that effort in particular. Some also cited what they regarded as inadequate or mistaken management notions about what did or did not constitute priority tasks. Finally, the interviews revealed that a number of Middle East intelligence managers and analysts believe that they lack the time, training, and experience to produce the kinds of assessments expected of them.

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V. PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

As can be seen in all the preceding, our survey of the recent performance of the Intelligence Community vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli problem has persuaded us that shortcomings of some magnitude existed. And we have concluded that unless corrective action is taken, similar problems could reemerge in a future crisis.

Our recommendations must be preliminary in nature because, as previously suggested, the conclusions on which they rest must as yet be counted as interim. Our recommendations are also confined to matters of overall concern to the community. No attempt has been made to evaluate the performance of particular individuals or of particular units within the various offices and agencies.

A. Collection Matters

Action to be taken:

1. In cooperation with appropriate agencies, offices, and committees, the IC Staff will sponsor and chair, perhaps on an annual basis, a review of collection products in terms of their format, timeliness, assigned priorities, and general usefulness to analytical consumers. Emphasis in this review will be placed on means to help consumers understand the significance of information provided to them.

a. DDO/CIA will seek ways to provide less cryptic data concerning the reliability of sources and reports, consider the provision of more extensive evaluations of contents, and together with production officers develop procedures and incentives for increasing contacts and "cross-talk" between Community analysts and DDO officers.

b. NSA will investigate ways to highlight significant items and patterns drawn from its own COMINT and ELINT product, for the benefit of the analytical community.

c. NPIC will also identify additional means to permit it rapidly to highlight the significance of its own product for analysts.

2. The IC Staff will review the existing system of collection requirements in terms of its ability to respond quickly and effectively in crisis situations. This review will concentrate on the identification of the principal questions which need to be answered during a crisis. It will lead to

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the establishment of a system which would through person-to-person contacts and lively exchanges of information and opinions promote the search for actual information and the formulation of analytical judgments; such a system will not try to assess the data as it arrives or seek to draw up formal lists of requirements.

3. The Community as a whole will establish a common alert mechanism to deal with crisis situations. [REDACTED]

E.O. 12958, as amended
Section 3.3(b)(1)

B. The Analytic Effort

Action to be taken:

1. IC Staff, with all-agency participation, will develop regular systems to be implemented by the NIOs to ensure that serious divergent points of view and conflicting elements of information not be submerged by managerial fiat or the mechanism of reinforcing consensus.

a. Such systems will be charged in addition with ensuring that in a crisis the analytical Community is aware of the significance collectors attach to the information being provided.

b. Such systems will also be charged with ensuring the establishment of means to provide the views of devils' advocates, adversary procedures, and the use of gaming techniques as appropriate.

c. A system will be established for the regular, perhaps periodic, review of NIEs and SNIEs to determine if updated and revised versions should be issued, such reviews and such issuances to help the analytical Community to focus on key problems and to recall previous wisdom.

d. The architects of these systems will be responsible for the setting up of regular procedures for the exchange of substantive views, ideas, and information within the Community, perhaps in normal times through periodic seminars, in times of crisis through electronic means.

2. A community-wide review will be undertaken under the IC Staff to determine the advisability of revamping existing warning mechanisms, procedures, publications, doctrines, and analytical methodologies; and to study ways to assign a clear warning function to production offices and analysts; and to recommend ways to establish clear guidelines for systematic presentations of probability.

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3. The Community will consider the adoption of a coherent national family of products for publication during periods of crisis, so as to provide high-level consumers with frequent assessments and with warning advisories as appropriate, and so as to create a system which would ensure rapid coordination and the effective expression of any important divergencies of view.

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A NOTE ON SOURCES AND METHODS

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A NOTE ON SOURCES AND METHODS

This study was undertaken at the behest of the DCI. It was initially prepared by members of the Product Review Group of the Intelligence Community Staff and by officers from CIA, DIA, State/INR, NSA, and IDA temporarily assigned to the IC Staff to participate in the post-mortem review.

The interpretations of events and judgments of intelligence performance appearing in this report rest on the facts as perceived by the post-mortem team and, unless otherwise indicated, reflect in general (though not necessarily in detail) a preliminary Community-wide view.

General Procedures

The members of the post-mortem team conducted interviews of selected Community analysts and supervisors, acquired and reviewed selected intelligence issuances for designated periods, and examined a considerable body of information on which intelligence assessments were based.

(a) *Interviews.* Two IC Staff officers spent eight working days interviewing key intelligence personnel at DIA, CIA, INR, and NSA, as noted below:

7-9 November	- DIA
12-14 November	- CIA
15 November	- INR
16 November	- NSA

Interviews in the agencies were conducted at several levels, from individual desk analyst to deputy director. A total of some 75 individual and conference interviews were held.

(b) *Research of Finished Intelligence.* A list of all non-serial finished intelligence products on the Arab-Israeli problem since the June War was consulted. Over 50 of the most important items—e.g., Arab-Israeli Handbooks, NIEs, DIA Intelligence Appraisals and Military Intelligence Summaries, CIA Memoranda and Special Reports, and INR Research Notes—were reviewed in depth.

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A review was also made of serial production, both analytical (such as CIA's CIB, the USIB Watch Report, and the DIA INTSUM, and collection-related (e.g., the NSA SIGINT Summary and the NIC Watch Officers' Notes), for the period 1 March - 6 October 1973. As a rule, serial production issued before or after that period was not reviewed.

(c) Review of Intelligence Information and Collection. An effort was made to identify and examine the information used in compiling the most important pieces of finished intelligence. State and DAO traffic, military attache reports, SIGINT, PHOTINT, clandestine reporting, and FBIS reports for the period 1 January to 6 October 1973 (particularly from mid-September on) were reviewed. Certain departmental briefings and internal memoranda were also screened. A major attempt was also made to assess collection efforts, SIGINT, PHOTINT, HUMINT.

The Warning Problem

A related but discrete post-mortem study of the warning process is under way within the IC Staff. It has, to date, produced material which contributed significantly to the preparation of this report (particularly in the areas of product review and collection analysis), and it will permit the issuance of additional reports in the future.

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