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~~(S)~~ NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE NRO STAFF

8 December 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. MARK
DR. COOK

SUBJECT: Definition of National and Tactical Intelligence.

The attached letter to the National/Tactical Interface Steering Group from Admiral Turner gives his views on the definition of National and Tactical Intelligence. The letter provides insight into Admiral Turner's position in this area.

This copy was provided to Col. [REDACTED] the NRO representative on the working group of the National/Tactical Interface Study. It was provided officially to all working group members.

[REDACTED]

Brigadier General, USAF
Director

Attachments: As Stated

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Cochairmen, National/Tactical Interface
Steering Group

SUBJECT: Definition of National and Tactical Intelligence (U)

1. (U) I hear a good bit of what I believe is inaccurate utilization of the terms "national" and "tactical" intelligence. Inaccuracies develop from the fact of the very complex and difficult subject with which you are wrestling. I would like to share with you my views on how we define national and tactical intelligence, because unless there is full agreement on this, your study can only end in controversy.

2. (U) I believe that there are five bases on which you could divide intelligence into national and tactical categories:

- a. By the quality or nature of the intelligence activity and/or output;
- b. By who produces the intelligence;
- c. By who utilizes the intelligence;
- d. By who collects the intelligence;
- e. By the program in which the activity appears.

3. (U) Subdivision by nature and quality: I find it difficult to find any examples of intelligence which are uniquely national or uniquely tactical in all circumstances. For instance, the most detailed tactical intelligence activity might be a lookout with binoculars sighting four tanks coming across the East German/West German border. Clearly, this is primarily a matter of concern to the tactical commander. Yet, there are many circumstances in which it would be brought immediately to the attention of the President of the United States; e.g., it was the initiation of hostilities; e.g., it was the appearance of an armored division in an area where we had never noted or expected one before and during a war. Similarly, during the Mayaguez crisis, the President was intimately involved in details of the movement of boats with personnel in them, normally a very tactical matter. At the other end of the spectrum, I can hardly think of a piece of intelligence primarily intended for use at

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SUBJECT: Definition of National and Tactical Intelligence

the national level which is not of some concern to major tactical commanders. In short, what is national and what is tactical by its nature varies with the circumstances and with the level of command. Most frequently, one man's tactics is another man's strategy.

4. (U) Subdivision by producer: If the previous paragraph is correct, it's almost axiomatic that no matter who produces the intelligence it is going to be difficult to label it either national or tactical. In addition, the way we are organized for producing intelligence there certainly is no clear line between who does what on this particular ground.

5. (U) Subdivision by consumer: Again, no matter who the intended consumer is, there may well be other consumers who are equally involved in the question and it would be impossible to subdivide on this ground.

6. (S) Subdivision by collector of intelligence: Collection systems, especially the large vacuum cleaner space systems, do not take into account the eventual use of the information being collected. This is becoming more apparent as processing and dissemination systems link the collector directly to both national and tactical level users. As in the case of the other instances, there is no clear line of demarcation in collection either.

7. (C) Program in which the activity appears: There is a clear line of demarcation in programmatic terms; e.g., either the activity unit is in the NFIP or it is not. The key criteria for placing an activity in the NFIP is that it is primarily (not exclusively) in support of the national level as opposed to the tactical level.

8. (C) It therefore seems to me that what we are talking about in your study is twofold:

a. Program and budget matters related to collection assets which are designed to provide the best mix of capabilities to meet combined national and tactical needs.

b. Tasking/dissemination procedures for existing capabilities (regardless of what they were originally programmed to do) which ensure the collected information meets the needs of both national and tactical users.

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9. (C) In this connection I would like to clarify my views on the major concerns of the report. They should be:

a. How we conduct some review in the budget process to ensure that:

(1) There are sufficient combined assets to meet both national and tactical intelligence needs.

(2) That there is not undue duplication between national and tactical assets.

b. How we ensure that the information relevant to tactical needs from nationally funded collection systems is made available in a timely manner to the proper tactical commanders, and conversely, that non-NFIP funded systems provide relevant and timely information to the national level.

STANSFIELD TURNER