Date: Tue, 29 Sep 2009 12:13:14 -0400
To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy of Sciences panel on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge lloyd.etheredge@yale.edu

Subject: 5. Groupthink & $75 Billion/Year Bureaucracies

Dear Dr. Fischhoff & Study Group Members:

A brief suggestion:

First Principles: Multiple Advocacy

I hope it is within your mandate to remind Admiral Blair of first principles & the wisdom of confirmations across multiple independent sources & methods. And, as Alex George recommended, the wisdom of a President actually confronting his disagreements about reality directly, with a strong multiple advocacy process. [I.e., Thus: my recommendation for a maximum-support advocacy exercise for Rory Stewart's views which (archetypically) recur across UDC intervention cases.]

Groupthink and George Bush's $75 Billion/Year Unified System

- You have been asked to give advice to a new and truly scary system, a $75 billion/year mega-bureaucracy that was built by a President who did not read the daily newspapers, who liked living in a comfortable bubble with a Daily Brief created by his staff, secure in his knowledge that - via tapping and mining all of the world's communication systems and financial data - he would be more in touch with reality than anyone else.

A $75 billion/year bureaucratic system has to require most analysts to spend most of their time in meetings, drafting memos, and trading paperwork with

each other. Often they will live in the Washington DC suburbs or similar comfortable places to raise families, surrounded by the media systems that Alex Jones has outlined in Losing the News. And actually competing in an increasingly hierarchical system for access to the ultimate career-validating documents that will be drafted and redrafted and tweaked by many committees and by people with different ideas about their careers before getting to the President. Even high-performance bureaucracies are hard to maintain over time.

Moynihan's Theory

One of the first requirements of a system should be to keep the President from the dangers of groupthink. Moynihan was a good social scientist and informed observer. His hypotheses in Secrecy: The American Experience (1999) would be timely. [Recommendations like lots more outsourcing & publishing almost everything for outside discussion make sense to me.][A caveat: I can't speak to designing a system if it is relying heavily on highly controversial secret NAS wiretaps of all the world's human communications and financial data systems. If all of this must be integrated in the end, before anything gets to the President, by a new layer of people with super-high NAS security clearances in one building, then defeating groupthink or bureaucratic cultures, etc. is a more complicated problem. (Tho' my suggestion for restarting content analysis & letting lots of independent academics and others build more direct access systems to major forms of global public communications could help.)

The New York Times as the World's Best Intelligence Service

I notice that Nicholas Lemann, Dean of the Columbia U. School of Journal-

ism, is a member of DBASSE. You might want to ask him about training professional journalists v. 9-5 intelligence analysts. Likely, <u>The New York Times</u> still is the best intelligence service in the world on most issues. Good journalists are self-starting entrepreneurs. They get out and meet people. They develop their own independent sources and skills at evaluating what they are hearing; I'm not sure that Foreign Service Officers, or spies, providing input into the US system have equivalent training.

best wishes,
LE

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Director, Government Learning Project
Policy Sciences Center 127 Wall St., Room 322 - Box 208215
New Haven, CT 06520-8215
URL:www.policyscience.net301-365-5241 (v); lloyd.etheredge@yale.edu
(email)