Guide to the Study of Intelligence

Who Are the Customers for Intelligence?

by Peter C. Oleson

Who uses intelligence and why? The short answer is almost everyone and to gain an advantage. While nation-states are most closely identified with intelligence, private corporations and criminal entities also invest in gathering and analyzing information to advance their goals. Thus the intelligence process is a service function, or as Australian intelligence expert Don McDowell describes it,

Information is essential to the intelligence process. Intelligence... is not simply an amalgam of collected information. It is instead the result of taking information relevant to a specific issue and subjecting it to a process of integration, evaluation, and analysis with the specific purpose of projecting future events and actions, and estimating and predicting outcomes.¹

It is important to note that intelligence is prospective, or future oriented (in contrast to investigations that focus on events that have already occurred).

As intelligence is a service, it follows that it has customers for its products. McDowell differentiates between “clients” and “customers” for intelligence. The former are those who commission an intelligence effort and are the principal recipients of the resulting intelligence product. The latter are those who have an interest in the intelligence product and could use it for their own purposes.² Most scholars of intelligence do not make this distinction. However, it can be an important one as there is an implied priority associated with a client over a customer.

Intelligence Communities (plural)

There are four communities that use intelligence: the national security community, the homeland security community, the law enforcement community, and the private sector.

When thinking about intelligence, often the first thought one has is of the national

² McDowell, p 85.
intelligence community. This is the grouping of 16 agencies (not including the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and its several centers) that are involved in intelligence support to national security, foreign and defense policy, military support, and counter-espionage.³

The clients and customers of national security intelligence include the President and his national security team. While the President and members of the National Security Council represent the apex of this team, the national security team extends across many departments and agencies of the federal government and geographically to the commanders of the combatant commands and their subordinates.⁴

Since the attacks of 9/11, other intelligence communities have evolved in the U.S. Senior officials of the Department of Homeland Security refer to “homeland security intelligence” and the “homeland security intelligence community” as something distinct from the national intelligence community.⁵ This homeland security intelligence community includes governmental elements not included in the national intelligence community, including the intelligence entities within the Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau of the Department of Homeland Security, the Customs and Border Protection Bureau, the Transportation Security Administration, the U.S. Secret Service, and state and regional intelligence fusion centers throughout the U.S. There is some overlap between the national intelligence community and the homeland security intelligence community, as the Office of Intelligence and Analysis in the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Coast Guard are members of both communities.⁶ According to a former head of intelligence in the Department of Homeland Security, homeland security intelligence (HSI)

“…needs to be more than just counterterrorism. Instead HSI needs to be a strategic effort based on creating a new tradecraft rather than focusing on traditional formulas in terms of intelligence collection.”⁷

Customers for homeland security intelligence include some of the same as above. The President, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Attorney General are all principal customers for such intelligence. But so are governors and other officials at

³ (See www.odni.gov for the listing of the organizations of the national intelligence community.)
⁴ See the chart “Who Are the Customers for U.S. Intelligence?”
⁵ Remarks of Charlie Allen, former Under Secretary for Intelligence, Department of Homeland Security, to the International Association for Intelligence Education, Washington Chapter, September 14, 2010, from the notes of the author.
⁶ For a detailed overview of the homeland security intelligence enterprise, see Mark A. Randol (2009), The department of homeland security intelligence enterprise: operational overview and oversight challenges for congress, Congressional Research Service 7-5700, www.crs.gov, R40602.
⁷ INSA Insider, November 23, 2010. This is an email sent periodically to members of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance.
the state, local, and tribal levels of government. Under the US political system, if an incident occurs in a state, the governor of that state is the principal in charge of responding. The federal government plays a supporting role. The establishment of intelligence fusion centers in many states represents a significant customer base for homeland security intelligence. These fusion centers are managed by state officials or a consortium of regional and local law enforcement officials. While there is a strategic aspect to homeland security intelligence, the great emphasis is on operational and tactical intelligence that will allow prevention of a terrorist incident. Principal customers for this level of homeland security intelligence include the enforcement arms of the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, state and local police departments and other first responders. Special mechanisms have been created to allow the sharing of classified national intelligence with often uncleared state, local and tribal police.

Similarly, with the adoption of the concept of “intelligence led policing,” since 2000 there has been a growing law enforcement intelligence community. The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses intelligence for more than counterterrorism and counterespionage investigations, as do many of the other members of this intelligence community. Elements of the law enforcement intelligence community include the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Bureau of Prisons, and state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. Both the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department and the New York Police Department maintain sizable intelligence elements. As with the homeland security intelligence community, there is overlap. For example, the FBI is a member of all three intelligence communities, and DEA is a member of the national and law enforcement intelligence communities.

Law enforcement intelligence has many of the same customers that homeland security intelligence does. At the federal level, principal customers would be the Attorney General and the Secretaries of the Treasury and Homeland Security, and the enforcement arms of their departments. Principal customers at the state level include the state police organization and local jurisdictions, including tribal police.

8 “State and major urban area fusion centers serve as focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information between the Federal Government and state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners.” US National Intelligence: An Overview 2013, at www.ODNI.gov
9 One example is the regional fusion center in the Cleveland, Ohio area, which is manned by state and local police agencies and assignees from the Department of Homeland Security. Other fusion centers serve an entire state. (Briefing by the Cleveland fusion center to the annual AFIO conference in 2011.)
11 The Interagency Threat Assessment and Coordination Group (ITACG) was created to help DHS, the FBI and the NCTC produce terrorism and related products tailored to the needs of state, local and tribal police as well as private sector partners.
Many of the state intelligence fusion centers are “all threat” centers. This term means that they focus on criminal activity other than terrorist activity, such as drug production and smuggling and gang activity.

Intelligence is no longer the exclusive purview of the government. Intelligence techniques have been adopted by private businesses seeking to be competitive in an increasingly global marketplace. Many major corporations now employ analysts that utilize the intelligence skills and techniques traditionally identified with the national intelligence community. These include market analysis for business planning and investment, the protection of critical infrastructures against criminals and others who would exploit them, and identification and pursuit of counterfeiters of a company’s goods.

**WHO ARE THE US CUSTOMERS FOR INTELLIGENCE?**

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<th><strong>Department / Agency</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal Uses for Intelligence</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>President &amp; Vice President</td>
<td>Threat understanding; policy determinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Legislation &amp; government oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL SECURITY COMMUNITY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Security Advisor</td>
<td>Threat understanding; foreign &amp; defense policies coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>Foreign policy advice, negotiations, security of diplomatic posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of the Treasury</td>
<td>Financial policy, enforcement of sanctions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of Defense</td>
<td>Defense policy advice; command &amp; control of military forces; weapons systems R&amp;D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)</td>
<td>Military advice; command &amp; control of military forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Combatant Commanders</td>
<td>Command &amp; control of military forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Subordinate military commanders</td>
<td>Command &amp; control of military forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney General</td>
<td>Legal advice; direction of the FBI and prosecutions</td>
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<td>Secretary of Homeland Security / Director, Secret Service</td>
<td>Protection of the President, Vice President &amp; foreign dignitaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of Energy</td>
<td>Nuclear weapons R&amp;D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of National Intelligence (DNI)</td>
<td>Threat understanding; intelligence advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC)</td>
<td>Counterterrorism strategies &amp; plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>• National Counterproliferation Center (NCPC)</td>
<td>Counterproliferation strategies</td>
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- National Counterintelligence Executive (NCIX) Coordination of counterintelligence activities

**HOMELAND SECURITY COMMUNITY**

- Secretary of Homeland Security Homeland security policy advice
- Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Anti-smuggling, WMD detection, illegal entry
- Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) Visa / immigrant identity fraud
- US Coast Guard (USCG) Water borders & port security, anti-smuggling
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Airport, rail, and bus security

**ATTORNEY GENERAL**

- Director, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Counterintelligence & counterterrorism investigations; intelligence operations
- State, Local & Tribal law enforcement agencies Counterterrorism planning & operations
- Fusion Centers Terrorism threat understanding

**LAW ENFORCEMENT SECURITY COMMUNITY**

- Director, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) International drug smuggling; domestic abuse of controlled substances
- US Attorneys Prosecutions
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) Investigation of firearms smuggling & explosives
- Bureau of Prisons Control of gangs

**SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

- Subordinate DHS elements (USSS, CBP, ICE, USCG) Investigation of selected crimes (e.g., threats to the President, financial cyber crimes, smuggling, fraud)

**STATE, LOCAL & TRIBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (e.g., NYPD, LASD)** All types of criminal investigations

**OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES**

- Secretary of Commerce Enforcement of export controls
- US Trade Representative Negotiation of trade pacts
- Federal Trade Commission Violations of US laws
- Securities and Exchange Commission Market manipulation, fraud, etc.
- Secretary of Transportation Aviation policy
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Security of airlines, railroads, bridges & highways
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster and terrorism event mitigation planning & operations
Federal Reserve | Integrity of the US dollar
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**INTERNATIONAL ENTITIES**
United Nations
  - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) | International nuclear industry & treaty compliance monitoring
Allies (e.g., NATO) | Coalition defense, counterterrorism, international crime & many other purposes
“Nontraditional allies” or “issue-specific allies” (e.g., Russia, China, others) | Counterterrorism, international crime, cooperative operations (e.g., anti-piracy patrols)
**Private Sector**
  (illustrative examples)
  Technology firms | Technology trends, competitor activities, market understanding, etc.
Natural resources firms (e.g., oil exploration companies) | Strategic planning, investment, risk assessments, other
Financial sector (e.g., banks, investment firms, reinsurance companies, etc.) | Financial markets understanding, financial risk assessments, opportunity identification
Pharmaceutical firms | Product counterfeiters

**Uses of Intelligence**

Intelligence has no intrinsic value. Intelligence collected, analyzed, and put on the shelf is worthless. It is wasteful of expensive and often dangerous efforts. Intelligence is a service, and should be evaluated as such. Its *raison d’être* is to assist others in the accomplishment of their goals. This could be a national policymaker, a district police commander, or the board of directors of a company contemplating a major industrial investment. Intelligence is a specialized function that adds value to a larger enterprise. If it does not, it cannot be justified. In some cases the value of intelligence may be measured in increased efficiency, but most often it is for increased effectiveness.

Intelligence can be used for strategic, operational, and/or tactical purposes. McDowell notes that

Strategic intelligence analysis can be considered a specific form of research that addresses any issue at the level of breadth and detail necessary to describe threats, risks, and opportunities in a way that helps determine programs and policies.” As such “strategic intelligence is a manager’s tool.” Whereas, “intelligence that services the daily needs of supervisors and line managers and focuses on immediate, routine, and on-going activities of the organization – the frontline functions, as it were – may be called tactical or
The most practical, intimate application of intelligence to identifying and dealing with target individuals and organizations has always been termed tactical. Activities involving operations against multiple targets of like or related character, where coordination of effort is the key, is called operational, and the intelligence designed to support it is operational intelligence.

Strategic intelligence is used in many ways by many entities, but principally for policymaking and resource planning. At its most fundamental, intelligence is used for strategic warning. It has been the failure of providing strategic warning that has led to the most in-depth examinations of the national intelligence community and calls for reform. The prime examples are the failures to warn of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the 9/11 Al-Qaida attacks on the US in 2001. At the national level, strategic intelligence studies are often used for educational purposes by policymakers. This is especially true early in a new administration when policymakers are adjusting to their new positions and responsibilities. Intelligence analysis underlies most policy planning efforts that address foreign or defense issues. A more controversial use of intelligence is for the evaluation of existing policies and whether they are successful or not. This use of intelligence has often led to clashes between intelligence professionals and policymakers who are vested in a particular policy.

Another use of strategic intelligence is for treaty monitoring. The 1979 ratification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) treaty was held up in the United States Senate when concerns were expressed that the US could not monitor Soviet compliance with the treaty’s terms. Not until Secretary of Defense Harold Brown testified in detail in executive session about US intelligence capabilities against the Soviet Union were these concerns allayed.

Intelligence is critical to national defense resource planning and investment. President Eisenhower supported the development of the U-2 reconnaissance aircraft and of programs to develop satellite-based imagery and signals collection in order to learn about the size and capabilities of the strategic forces of the Soviet

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12 McDowell, pp 5, 7.
13 McDowell, p 13.
16 An interesting case study related to this point is recounted in James J. Wirtz’s article, Intelligence to Please? The order of battle controversy during the Vietnam War, Political Science quarterly, Vol. 106, No. 2 (Summer 1991), pp 239-263. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152228.
17 Personal experience of the author who helped write portions of Secretary Brown’s testimony when on the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
Union. Imagery from U-2 over-flights of the Soviet Union (up until May 1960 when Francis Gary Power’s U-2 was downed by a Soviet surface-to-air missile) revealed that the estimated strength of the Soviet long-range aviation bomber force and intercontinental missile force were exaggerated. This permitted the President to avoid unnecessary investments in U.S. strategic weapons programs at that time. Intelligence estimates are used to support investment decisions in the annual defense budget process. The sizing of U.S. forces is justified in terms of the threats faced by the United States. During the Cold War the intelligence community developed lengthy and detailed National Intelligence Estimates on Soviet strategic nuclear forces, conventional forces, and other strategic topics, which were used by U.S. force planners to justify investments in military systems. The acquisition plans for major weapons systems are also based on intelligence estimates. Each planned major weapon system is supposed to respond to a validated intelligence threat assessment.\textsuperscript{18} The underlying philosophy in both the sizing of forces and design of advanced weapons is to gain an advantage over a potential adversary.

Operational and tactical intelligence is used for various purposes. Warning or alerting of impending attack or commission of a crime is critical to operational commanders in the military, homeland security or law enforcement communities. Intelligence also helps them decide how to deploy their forces in anticipation of an operation or response to a target’s activities. Intelligence can also identify new targets or individuals previously unknown to military and law enforcement operators.

In the business intelligence field, intelligence is used also for gaining an advantage over competitors and influences the development of corporate strategies, marketing campaigns, and investments for new products.\textsuperscript{19}

In all of the communities identified the clients and customers for intelligence vary according to the subject, their mission and responsibilities, and circumstances. What is notable is how far the intelligence profession has spread since the early days of World War II to involve today so many governmental, private and international organizations.

**Readings for Instructors**


\textsuperscript{19} See Stephanie Hughes, “Competitive intelligence as competitive advantage: The theoretical link between competitive intelligence, strategy and firm performance,” especially Figure 1, p 7. *Journal of Competitive Intelligence and Management*, 3(3), 2005, pp 3-18.
Don McDowell’s *Strategic Intelligence: A handbook for practitioners, managers, and users, Rev. ed.*, (2009, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland) is an excellent guide to how to conduct intelligence analyses for different purposes.

The website of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (www.dni.gov) has many reference publications useful for understanding the applications of intelligence.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) periodically updates a paper entitled “Intelligence Issues for Congress.” It contains non-partisan discussion of contemporary issues related to intelligence. It is available via the website of the Federation of American Scientists (www.fas.org). Also available at this website are other intelligence related government documents useful for classroom instruction.

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