MFR 040/8995

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Meeting with Senator Richard Durbin

**Date:** 04/27/2004

Time: 10:30 AM

Special access issues: none

Prepared by: Chris Kojm

Team Number: Front Office

Location: Russell Senate Office Building 364

Participants: Vice Chair Hamilton

Senator Durbin wanted to talk to the Vice Chair about oversight of the Intelligence Community. Durbin said that Senators were just overwhelmed with Committee assignments. He said that he was a Member of 16 Committees and subcommittees, 6 of which were appropriations subcommittees, and that in addition he was a member of the Leadership.

Durbin mentioned that to have good oversight you needed very good staff of sufficient quantity, and that a Committee needed the ability to go public. These conditions did not pertain in the world of intelligence oversight. Durbin had  $1/3^{rd}$  of the time of one staffer, and that because of classification issues he could not get any help from his own office. Moreover, the Committee had no ability to go public with any of its concerns. The work is highly technical and time consuming, and there is a sharp hierarchy in the flow of information. The Intelligence Community is very selective about what information it shares: some only flows to the Chair and Vice Chairs, some to other Committee members, and the least to members who are not on the Committee.

Everyone in this world is just too chummy, addressing the DCI as "George." The Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee is mostly concerned about protecting the President. In short, the environment is not at all conducive to oversight.

Some 95% of the witnesses are a waste of time. Their statements are designed to not convey information; they are not responsive to questions. The questioning is no better. In an appropriations hearing, the Members get handed a 120 page document, of which 100 pages is the CIA's view of the world, and only 20 pages deal with the budget. Durbin noted that he was the last one in line to ask questions. Of all the questions asked before his turn came up, none of them were on the budget. Durbin concludes there is no oversight by the Senate of the Intelligence Community.

Durbin believes that 8 years is not a long enough time for Members to learn the intricacies of the Intelligence Community. Also, he is worried about the impact of huge Intelligence Community budget increases on civil liberties, as the Intelligence Community has no sensitivity to civil liberties issues. He is also highly doubtful about the ability of the CIA and FBI to reform. They are not anywhere close to where they need to be on reform; both have huge difficulties in terms of reforming their internal cultures, and he sees little progress.

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