

MFR 04017156

[Redacted]

Event: William Crowell, NSA retired. NSA Deputy Director for Operations, 1991-1994; Deputy Director of NSA 1994-1997.

Type of Event: Interview

Date: December 9, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

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9/11 Closed by Statute

Team Number: 2

Location: Commission's K St. Office

Participants – non-Commission: Mr. William P. Crowell, NSA Retired; [Redacted]
(NSA GC Office for most of the interview)

Participants – Commission: Col. Lorry Fenner, Gordon Lederman

(U) BACKGROUND.

(U) Mr. Crowell was interviewed by the JI staff on 13 September 2002. We reviewed the record of that interview.

(U) Mr. Crowell started with NSA in 1962 as a Soviet analyst in the old A Group and within 15 years moved up to management level. In the 1970s he served in S&T intelligence as Chief of W Group; and then as Chief of A Group. In 1989 they made him the Deputy Director for Resources but he wasn't happy with that so he retired and went to industry.

In 1990, just before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, DIRNSA ADM Studeman asked him to come back as the Chief of Staff (which became Ex Dir and then went back to Chief of Staff). In that position he designed the IT architecture to support the war effort. In 1991 he became the DDO and led the 1st NSA Transformation under DIRNSA, ADM McConnell; that transformation involved moving NSA from a "radio to a network collection organization." In 1994 he became Deputy Director, first under McConnell and then, briefly, under LtGen Minihan. He retired a second time in 1997.

(U) He said he has "failed retirement" the second time as in January 1998 he joined a company, CYLINK, that worked with government agencies on encryption technologies. He became its CEO in November 1998 and the company was bought by SAFENET in February 2003. He continues to serve on the boards of 14 companies and on the DSB and other advisory panels. He does not currently work directly for the IC or DoD, but many of those companies do work for the IC.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

(U) DIRECTION ON COUNTERTERRORISM

Mr. Crowell cited DCID and PDD 35 as the IC's official statement of priorities. He mentioned [Redacted]

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Mr. Crowell went on to say that Terrorism targets were all put in the category of State sponsored. Overall they were handled by NSA's G Group [Redacted] and were generally aligned with countries. Each relevant area-focused shop had its own CT shop. The overall staff of G Group was charged with looking at the larger CT problem.

Mr. Crowell said that the IC effort during his time was against the [Redacted] [Redacted] CT targets were addressed in the context of the groups in particular countries that were on the [Redacted] (NSA worked other terrorist groups in their country or regional product line offices).

[Redacted] "It was clouded." [Redacted] They [Redacted] "searched for connections." [Redacted]

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[Redacted] "NSA is best in an emergency and a crisis," he said, and NSA looks not just backwards but also forwards.

The Deputy DCI, George Tenet, ran the IC community effort to review how to penetrate the [Redacted] and the DDCI's presence is why he attended. Mr. Crowell attended the meetings and usually brought an appropriate expert from the agency. The meetings were not management but substantive and working-level. All the players were present including Joint Staff, the DCI's Military Advisor (ADCI/MS), ASD/C3I, DIA, NIMA. The meetings were "expanded IC meetings" due to the military's desire to know about these targets since at that time the USG was focused on fighting small wars. He does not remember the CINCs or Services being there as they were represented by the Joint Staff or DIA. The foreign partners' capabilities were represented by CIA, NSA, or DIA for their respective INTs. FBI was invited to some meetings. INR was not present. The NSC was not represented, nor were State or local authorities. The participants asked "what do we know", "what don't we know", "what collection do we need to put in place", "how do we develop capabilities to fill gaps," "what will it cost", "what other efforts will be impacted." The effort on analysis was to ask "what do we need access to in order to plug the holes in our knowledge." The meetings were very action-oriented and did generate action items and reports on what needed to be done. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Tasks were assigned to experts. There was no separate [redacted] review for international terrorism.

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(U) The focus in 1996 and 1997 for the military was planning for the possibility of small wars with bad actors.

(U) NSA worked well with the predecessors to the ADCIs for Collection and Analysis, Charlie Allen and [redacted] and the DS&T before [redacted]. Each was a major player in the [redacted] forum (Charlie Allen was not yet ADCI/C).

[redacted] The IC then did what was easy to do against these targets, which was to use

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(U) Internal to NSA, Mr. Crowell and his experts would return from the [redacted] meetings and appoint a project leader for each target. They constructed working groups to develop collection and analysis ideas from which to develop NSA strategic plans. Then they would apportion resources to implement those plans. There was follow up at successive [redacted] meetings.

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[redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Mr. Crowell said that NSA did "lessons learned" from both failures and successes, although lessons-learned after failures are done differently than after successes.

[Redacted]

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But he started experiencing "Congressional staff" meddling in the day-to-day priorities of NSA.

[Redacted]

He remembers the UBL.

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He never heard of al Qa'ida before he retired. In the later stages of his tenure, UBL become someone that they were trying to find.

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We were interested in him as a "figure" due to proclamations.

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[Redacted]

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(U) IC working relationships in the 1990s were very uneven – "a series of waves." That went with the uneven handling of IC issues. Mr. Crowell considered the Hard Targets forum a high point in IC relations because they were really focused on adding value where they were needed. There was follow-up on the action items from the meetings.

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

There should have been reallocation of resources in the FYDP but this is a weak area for the IC for two reasons: First, the internal agency budget process is problematic. There was little discretionary money with the drawdowns without resorting to layoffs, and they can't reprogram large amounts without Congressional permission – and the IC generally wants to obtain Congressional approval for reprogramming below the threshold in order not to anger Congress. They would come up with strategies, put together budget proposals, and try to get approval but nothing is very timely. (2) There also has to be a reduction of overall competition for funds inside the IC and DoD. The competition had gone up while the funds went down. Demands and requirements in [REDACTED] at least, were going up. There were few drawdowns in requirements. There was increasing emphasis on [REDACTED]. He noted that he left before he could ascertain whether the results of the [REDACTED] discussions were actually implemented.

(U) There were several considerations to balance: First, there were fewer forces for the military to deploy, so the military considered the deployments more dangerous. Second, there is the ricebowl issue, whether anything can be eliminated; in contrast, as CEO had eliminated costs immediately. Cuts were salami sliced across the IC for the most part but some programs got protected (that meant the percentage taken out of the others grew). There was no consistency in which agencies or programs got protected. No one had consistent protected status. And if NRO had a cost overrun of even 1%, or if one of their programs was protected from a salami slice cut, the cuts to others would be very deep.

(U) In reference to relations between agencies, Mr. Crowell pointed out that it also went in waves and was largely personality dependent. He had good relations with CIA because he had worked there for 1.5 years. His Executive Assistant as Deputy Director was a CIA person and as DDO he had CIA personnel as Chiefs and deputies of major areas. He admitted this was a little unusual, but he meant it to encourage others to cooperate. One of his primary goals was to increase cooperation. The integration of CIA personnel into his organization also helped him to see when people weren't cooperating well. There is not enough integration now.

(U) Sharing and cooperation need mechanisms to work that are not dependent on personalities. Early on, he billed serving as an integree as a "learning experience," but that was not enough. Serving as an integree needs to be a criterion for promotion. One can reimburse expenses if people travel to meet with their counterparts. The relationships need constant management attention so organizational structures alone won't help. NSA is more aggressive about putting a lot of people in the DCI Centers and in [REDACTED] and joint activities than CIA was in putting people at NSA. He did have CIA people in W group and DIA in DEFSMAC (which DIA tried to drawdown but he warned them he would change its name if they did), and NIMA (he understands NIMA is even more integrated now with NSA – eg, [REDACTED]). He also had the first FBI analyst integree in A Group to take on the law enforcement issues if they came up and to set requirements for supporting law enforcement.

(U) ANALYTIC STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

Mr. Crowell reiterated that he moved the organization from radio to network collection. He said he had a strategy to put resources against and to guide collection. He sent everyone in DDO [Redacted] NSA also worked language development. But priorities did not match the ability to find people. The problem is to find Americans with native [Redacted]

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted]

As DDO, he also started an incentives program to have people crosstrain from common languages (Russian) to low density languages. All this took authorities, which took a long time to get. NSA also sponsors language education at schools like they do math training. When asked if there was cooperation on language training across the community, he pointed out different agencies need different things - NSA needs level 3s largely; most others need levels 1 and 2 except for the [Redacted]. He pointed out that NSA does transcription and not translating. Mr. Crowell also worked on developing tools in house and got [Redacted]. They also worked on virtual collaboration, [Redacted] common desk top and took a strategic view for planning for the future in the early 1990s (what NSA has today for analysts).

In reference to methodologies he said that transnational issues were changing the way NSA approached challenges. Regarding the USSR, [Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted] and analysts could draw a picture of it. He encouraged his analysts to think differently about the non-state terrorist threat by using a Soviet like approach. This is based on "focus." [Redacted]

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted]

It's difficult but it's a tractable problem. So is volume of comms. [Redacted]

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted]

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted]

Indications and Warning against the terrorist target will require intelligence and law enforcement as well [Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [Redacted]

(U) COLLECTION STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Mr. Crowell was brought back to revolutionize NSA from his industry experience. He took a number of steps. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] He wanted to regain these resources for modernization but didn't get them. Congress took these savings and that was devastating (more detail on Congress and the budget below). He built the Regional SIGINT Operations Centers (Kunia [Redacted], Medina [Redacted], Ft. Gordon [Redacted]) to take the place of these sites [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Mr. Crowell said partnerships are critical. [Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information

[Redacted] He maintained that all the successes in this area have come from their partnerships not from working alone. [Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information

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[Redacted] These changes were necessary because of the political changes in the world and the new financial realities. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] When we asked whether there was an IC plan for transnational collection he said "yes and no" and that few, including Charlie Allen, understood SIGINT collection very well. He said they often use IMINT as a frame of reference - point and shoot. That's not really the right paradigm for SIGINT. [Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information

[Redacted] 9/11 Classified Information

[Redacted] They would figure out how to get the target Charlie wanted without losing what else the collection could get. They would maximize the use of their resources. He said the

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

analysts must direct collection; someone who understands the target, not by the Charlie Allens of the world (he respects Mr. Allen a great deal).

[REDACTED] He explained that access was different from collection and analysis put together with these other two was very complicated and few understood it – such as the difference between access and collection. He said many people say you can't analyze as much as you collect. He said [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 9/11 Classified Information
9/11 Classified Information He said Congress does the resource piece, the IC management does resources and requirements and the Program Managers and internal to NSA the analysts don't handle all that as black and white – do the top requirements and then run out of resources. They try to allocate resources across the requirements.

[REDACTED] Many people don't understand that when they want SIGINT they can't just turn on the spigot. There is enormous target development that must be done before intelligence can be produced. There are two different versions of priorities – that you put all your resources against the target at the top of the priority list, or that you allocate resources across all priorities in a way that reflects the priority list. There was conflict between everyone who thought that they knew how the process worked and those that actually managed the system.

(U) CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT.

(U) In a business, the CEO reallocates resources as he/she sees fit; old products are phased-out, and resources are shifted to new products. Or, as Col. Fenner mentioned, you need to “downsize to modernize.” The Congressional Staff oversight process has become too intrusive to the day-to-day operations and priorities of NSA. Mr. Crowell had a “cross over plan” for reducing and eliminating legacy systems and building new systems/products based on the new strategic direction. But he couldn't get it done because of the way the process works. The budget that is submitted to Congress is extraordinarily detailed (NRO's is not but NSA's is – it evolved that way. The first DHS budget is pretty general in most areas as it should be) and takes a long time to pass and a long time to change.

(U) Mr. Crowell believes he should be able to present a strategic plan/business plan to the Board of Directors/Congress and if he gains their approval he should implement the details. But Congress goes by line item and if NSA cancelled a line item the money was gone, it couldn't be reprogrammed into a new NSA program. It would take two years to get a new line item. There is not adequate flexibility. There is not enough authority for the DCI or the SECDEF to make changes – and they do not need infinite authority. In contrast, in the private sector the board gives the CEO the authority, and the CEO executes. It would be refreshing for Congress to say that Congress does not run the IC. He was never able to reinvest on a grand scale.

(U) Specifically, Mr. Crowell worked with the NSA DDT, Jack Devine, on the new programs and they lost the money. They went before Congress and convinced them about the Transformation. They convinced them there was some risk that needed to be

[REDACTED]

taken. They had some success on new things that Congress approved. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The DCI and SECDEF were helpful in this effort. In the House – Goss, Harman, and Pelosi were helpful. In the Senate the Chairmen were very helpful as was Bob Kerrey and Bill Cohen (Cohen was not helpful on everything but was on some things). No staffers stand out as particularly helpful. The efforts really take a dedicated program over the long term. At CMS Joanne Isham in Congressional Affairs was first rate. The DCI would consent for him to go to Congress.

(U) Mr. Crowell recommended the H. Smith book, *The Power Game* on micromanagement. He said the chapter on congressional staffers is very accurate. Congressional members don't have the time to get really smart on the details and they depend on their staffers. (This is not just about Congress but is true more widely). Sometimes a staffer takes on too much power and says his member wants something when it's really just him/her. (As DDO, he forbid employees to say, "the DDO wants...") The micromanagement works against planning and execution of a coherent budget by the program managers. These staffers are not bad people though, they were rather exercising authorities that they truly did not possess.

(U) Mr. Crowell thought this problem comes in waves but was the worst in the mid-1990s. During the mid-1990s with resource allocations, the staff killed or pushed programs without a broad base. It is mostly dependent on personalities and organizational atmospherics. One needs strong leadership to overcome this. When other people arrogate that power to speak for the boss, he would call them on it. He could call George and ask – are they really speaking for you?

(U) The Commission should recommend that the quality and nature of congressional oversight be improved so that the IC and program managers can regain a strategic focus. You cannot focus on the strategic level if the budget has that much detail. HPSCI and SCCI direction has become too detailed.

(U) THE CHALLENGE OF MULTIPLE BOSSES.

(U) This is not the problem people think it is. The SECDEF has military interests and the DCI used to be all non-military interests before Afghanistan. The President has both. When it comes to military deployments, the DCI and the SECDEF have the same interests. DoD needs NSA's real time capability and interoperability. NSA is both a combat support agency and a national intelligence agency. If you took out the combat support agency part how would you do Information Assurance, he asked? The change to a USDI is irrelevant.

(U) COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND REORGANIZATION?

(U) When we asked Mr. Crowell if he wanted to talk to us about anything else, he asked the NSA representative to leave. He remarked that it wasn't a really big deal but he

[REDACTED]

wanted the Commissioners to consider his views on the following issues before others publicized them.

(U) Mr. Crowell said that although he respects George Tenet a great deal, the DCI has been preoccupied with running the CIA since 1991. The DCI is in a CIA building and all of his people are CIA people (even if they nominally wear an "IC headdress"). The DCI is also held responsible for the day-to-day operations of the CIA. In his view the DCI shares budget responsibility with too many people above and below him. He has to go to too many places (?). The DCI does not have any real authority over say the Tactical Cryptologic Program (TCP) but doesn't need it. But the President/Congress should give him budget authority over the strategic IC program(s).

(U) Mr. Crowell continued that the CIA works for the President. It is in their charter that they support the Executive Branch Departments and the President. The NSA reporting to the DCI and SECDEF both is not the problem; NSA's problem is not reporting to the DCI rather to the DCI qua CIA Director. He is perceived as making CIA decisions rather than IC decisions. Moreover, people from CIA who call NSA to make requests claim to be speaking in the DCI's name; he once called the DCI to ask about him about a specific instance, and the DCI had no idea that someone was querying NSA in the DCI's name.

(U) Mr. Crowell said the DCI needs to focus on civilian and military intelligence, to be a cabinet level official responsible to the President, and to have the commensurate aura and responsibility. He should be the peer of the SECDEF. Today – which hat does the DCI have on when he asks the SECDEF for a meeting? Since 1991, he has felt that the DCI and the CIA Director should be split.

(U) As such the DCI needs budget authority to have any decent power. To be real in Washington a person needs an agency – that's an organization and a budget (in advising on the new DHS he pushed for the same things). DCI doesn't really need day-to-day control over collection, but should have it over All Source Analysis – the NIEs, a consolidated intelligence product. He should also have charge of truly community assets like R&D and anything else that is commonly oriented. The DCI receives no benefit from DARPA. Mr. Crowell is convinced that TIA (Total or Terrorist Information Awareness) would have gone over better if it had been an intelligence community R&D effort as an analytic collaboration and data mining tool rather than one under DoD (under ADM Poindexter).

(U) Mr. Crowell is convinced the TTIC is only under the DCI for one reason (rather than in DHS): the DCI has analysts. TTIC will have to be a joint DHS, DCI, and FBI center. Technology will facilitate information-sharing.

(U) The USDI is a good thing because the military services need a place for staff to go – the SECDEF needs a focus for military intelligence issues. Whether it is in ASD/C3I or a USDI does not matter. NRO is not an intelligence organization – it is an acquisition organization. It should not be part of the "white Air Force."



(U) Relative to an MI-5 type agency, he differs from Prof. Zelikow on the merits of having an MI-5. The truth is that you cannot tell what is CT and what is not for a long time. British laws and rights are much different than in the U.S. We need a situation in which terrorism is a violation of the law. Eventually there will be a choice whether to prosecute or prevent. If you create a new organization, it is just a new place that the FBI must share information with – and the FBI is not very good at liaison.

(U) For intelligence (and NSA particularly) to do its job it needs tasking. And it needs feedback – this is critical and people forget that. NSA is good when it receives feedback.

(U) This is an important time to keep law enforcement strong. He believes MI-5 has too many seams. He does not advocate the MI-5 approach for the U.S. We need to build organizations with as few seams as possible. The seams pre911 had gotten too big. Mr. Crowell said, to be successful the IC members need technologies that help facilitate coordination and cooperation in the communities they deal with. Other agencies need this too in the integration efforts. FBI needs LE technologies; DHS need State, local, and private-sector connections outside LE largely for consequence management; and Intelligence needs to deliver information for seamless tracking of people inside and outside the US.

(U) In his view, information sharing is the most difficult problem for the IC, and it is extremely critical and difficult when extended to law enforcement and now, first responders (in DHS). We need complex interoperable IT for proper sharing and we need to use technology to enforce policies about what can be shared in order to protect the 1st and 4th Amendments. Our freedoms and liberties are not the problems. Nor is counter intelligence/leaks. That is true because we can also use technologies for enforcement against abuses and compromises. We have great auditing technologies the IC and LE can use for this. There must be strong policy, guidelines, and rules and the technology to enforce them. We can build auditable systems for policy enforcement so long as policymakers start the process.

Mr. Crowell told us he testified in closed session to the Church and Pike Commissions about abuses of the IC and about Constitutional safeguards and liberties. The basis of his testimony became USSID 18. He still believes it's viable. There are no problems collecting against U.S. persons when the rules are clear.

