The collection activities of the intelligence community

Introduction

The phrase Intelligence Cycle refers to the process of tasking, gathering, processing, analysing and disseminating intelligence. The import of this is that the intelligence cycle informs the daily operation of the Intelligence Community. The Intelligence Community refers to a group of people working for government agencies and special or security agencies which carry out intelligence activities for a specific country.

According to Hulnick (2006), the intelligence process has its genesis in the intelligence consumers: those who are in need of the intelligence information. This group comprises military officials and officers, policymakers and decision makers in the government cycle. The intelligence consumers must in turn have the need for intelligence information. Known as intelligence requirement, these needs are sifted and prioritised by and within the Intelligence Community before being used to determine the collection activities of the Intelligence Community.

In regard to the foregoing, experts have traditionally divided the intelligence cycle into five parts: requirements, collection, processing and exploitation, and analysis and production. After the needs of the intelligence consumers have been sorted out, it is important that there is collection. Some requirements need specific types of collection while others require several types of collection. The question on how should or can be collected to meet specific requirements is also fully settled (Geraint, 2009).

It must be noted that collection merely produces information, and not intelligence. It is only after the information has undergone processing and

exploitation that it can be deemed as intelligence and handed over to analysts. This process includes translations of the information gathered, decryption and interpretation of the stored data (Carello, 2012).

The four steps (identifying of requirements, information gathering and processing and exploitation) are then subjected to experts in different fields for analysis and production. These analysis and production convert the intelligence gathered, processed and exploited into reports which serve the needs of policy makers (Morrison, 2011).

Conclusion

Presently, there are experts such as Lowenthal (2011) who have added two more processes to the five steps above, so that there are seven steps in intelligence cycle. These processes are dissemination and consumption and feedback. The reason behind the addition of the two steps is that how policy makers consume intelligence reports is important and that it is of great value that policy makers report back how their intelligence requirements were met to allow room for adjustments and improvements

References

Carello, C. (2012). Unnerving Intelligence. Ecological Psychology, 24 (3), 241.

Geraint, E. (2009). Rethinking Military Intelligence Failure - Putting the Wheels Back on the Intelligence Cycle. Defence Studies, 9 (1), 22 – 46.

Hulnick, A. (2006). What's wrong with the Intelligence Cycle. Intelligence and National Security, 21 (6), 959 – 979.

Lowenthal, M. M. (2011). Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy. Washington D. C.: CQ Press.

Morrison, J. L. (2011). British Intelligence Failures in Iraq. Intelligence &

National Security, 26 (4), 509 – 520.