



# Of Knowledge and Power: The Complexities of National Intelligence (Praeger Security International)

*Robert Kennedy*

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This work examines the labyrinth of complexities that confronts the Intelligence Community in its efforts to provide accurate and timely intelligence in support of American foreign policy and national security interests. Kennedy begins with an analysis of the collection processes and the obstacles that must be overcome if accurate and meaningful information is to be obtained. He addresses such issues as the need for strategic vision and clarity in setting priorities, as well as constraints imposed by the executive branch and the complexities associated with translating priorities into collection programs. The focus then shifts to the obstacles that confront those tasked to analyze collected information, examining such issues as the impact of people, technology, and budgets on the overall analytical effort. The third area of emphasis for Kennedy centers on the quality control of collection and analysis, addressing both Executive Branch and Congressional Oversight of the intelligence processes. Finally, he examines issues associated with the distribution and use of the intelligence products - the so-called end game obstacles. Issues addressed include the lack of presidential support for and confidence in the Intelligence Community, the impact of worst-case planning, and the coloring of intelligence to suit policy preferences. Ultimately, the component parts provide the reader with a broad understanding of the Intelligence Community and the difficulties it faces as it strives to keep the United States safe and informed.

In the wake of recent intelligence failures, the Intelligence Community has come under increasing attack. Yet few people outside of government, and all too frequently many inside of government, do not understand just how difficult and complex are the processes of collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and effectively using gathered intelligence. The purpose of this undertaking is to illustrate the many road blocks the Intelligence Community confronts as it attempts to meet the needs of policymakers and to provide the average American, students of foreign and security policy, and many inside of government with a more comprehensive understanding of the overall intelligence effort. The complex processes for identifying, prioritizing, and communicating requirements to the intelligence community are further complicated by a lack of strategic vision on the part of American policy makers. Kennedy contends that those problems are compounded by Executive department oversight of the Intelligence Community, which has contributed significantly to past failures of intelligence. Moreover, the lack of effective oversight by Congress of the Intelligence Community in terms of the quality of its product upon which Congress has often been required to make life and death decisions too often has been either seriously deficient or non-existent. All too frequently, Kennedy notes, what could be called political coloring adversely affects the intelligence product. Intelligence findings are often colored to suit the preferred policies of decision-makers. As a result, actions are taken based on assumptions and opinions that are not supported by existing intelligence.

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