This chapter considers the potential of Army intelligence to satisfy the intelligence requirements of three groups of long-range planners.¹ To arrive at an assessment of these prospects, the chapter considers the two principal groups of issues dealt with in this report, systemic issues and methodological issues.

**SYSTEMIC ISSUES**

Our research found three areas that suggest systemic problems: channels to customers, collection and analysis, and intelligence production direction.

**Channels to Customers**

These channels provide the connection between Army intelligence and its long-range planning customers. The channels to the strategic planners appear informal and fragile. They are based on the acquaintance of planners with intelligence officials and involve official but informal support: a quick paper here and there, some suggestions that planners read certain intelligence reports.² Although Army intelligence has provided limited amounts of formally staffed inputs to the strategic planners’ documents like The Army Plan, we found

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¹This chapter draws on opinions expressed in interviews at the National Ground Intelligence Center, June 19, 1997, and on comments made during the April and June RAND workshops.

²Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Tim Daniels, ODCSOPS, February 19, 1997.
no intelligence production requirements written in direct support of strategic planners. Army intelligence does not appear to produce any intelligence product specifically for the strategic planners (although the planners make use of reports prepared for others). The channel to planners therefore appears rather limited and tenuous.

The channels to ACQ and FD both rely more heavily than the strategic planners do on formal intelligence products as described in Chapter Three. The informal, direct interaction with intelligence staff for ACQ has suffered with the reduction of foreign intelligence offices. The people at the remotest ends of the ACQ process, the contractors, must rely almost exclusively on products, since they have very little contact with analysts. Often the products available to the contractors and laboratories are little more than STAR reports. The channel to ACQ customers seems more clearly established than the channel to the strategic planners, but it appears to be no more robust.

FD may have the best, most robust connection, receiving an abundance of formal support while also maintaining direct contact with ODCSINT analysts. Well-established working relations with the War Plans Division of ODCSOPS and Concepts Analysis Agency provide both a paper trail of regular reports and force development activities in which Army intelligence participates, and also a face-to-face connection between ODCSINT staff and these customers. That said, it is interesting to note that the threat integration staff officers who were located within ODCSINT and who provided contact between ODCSINT and all the threat integration activities—and thus are part of the communications channel themselves—were among the most openly frustrated critics of Army intelligence during the workshops.

None of the channels between Army intelligence and its long-range planning customers are as sturdy as they might be.

**Collection and Analysis**

Two points emerged regarding collection and analysis. The first is that the amount of information collected across the nation’s intelligence community is huge and that collection from national technical means is expensive. In the present era, where uncertainty predominates and intelligence must scan the world broadly for signs of trou-
ble, the collection problem has expanded, producing more raw information from more sources that must be subjected to analysis to turn it into futures intelligence. Although, as noted in Chapter Two, much of its work is derivative of intelligence produced elsewhere, Army intelligence will nevertheless experience an increase in volume of information and intelligence that will prove taxing.

The second point is that Army intelligence does not have the number of analysts it once did. Downsizing has reduced the organization’s capabilities at a time when collection is expanding to target a wider number of actors and regions around the world. Symptomatic of the lack of adequate analytical capacity is the organization’s habit of detailing analysts away from their futures intelligence duties to staff the crisis of the day.3

Information technology is one possible source of help to make the analyst shortage less acute. Analysts need easy-to-use connections to the raw data and finished intelligence from other sources. They also need a rapid capability to search, organize, and correlate data from these materials. That said, long-range planners must also establish priorities so that the available resources can be applied against their most pressing issues.

**Intelligence Production Direction**

DODFIP controls most of Army intelligence’s production, so if Army intelligence wants to fence some of its production resources to explore a potential threat, it must first convince DODFIP. To make its case, Army intelligence would have to be able to describe the potential problem in enough detail to convince DIA that it was credible, and that it posed a threat to all the services. But few potential problems—especially those in the future—present themselves initially in great detail. And some may be a major concern only to the Army. Finally, ODCSOPS’ decision-based planning requires frequent assumptions testing, and often assumptions are not fleshed out with much detail. The present system for controlling intelligence production makes it very difficult for Army intelligence to secure the assets

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3We are grateful to Bob O’Connell of the National Ground Intelligence Center for this observation.
necessary to investigate the typical potential problems and assumptions likely to interest Army strategic planners.

**METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS**

The study found two important methodological issues that bear directly on the prospects for Army intelligence to provide support to the long-range planning community: capabilities-based planning versus threat-based intelligence and the ability of the Army to anticipate.

**Capabilities Versus Threat**

As discussed in Chapter Three, planning remains capabilities-oriented, seeking to exploit U.S. technological advantage to develop the most capable ground forces possible. Army intelligence, with its broader view encompassing foreign military, political, economic, and societal-cultural factors, takes a very different approach to the future. The friction that results is valuable in at least two ways. First, Army intelligence’s approach monitors the global security environment to assure the U.S. technological lead and thus the continued viability of capabilities-based planning. Second, it compels long-range planners to consider other (threat) factors that do not easily fit within their conceptions of planning. This is a healthy and valuable service for planners.

**Anticipation**

Anticipation lies at the core of long-range planning and futures intelligence. Planners need some sense of the circumstances and conditions likely to confront Army forces in the future so that they can frame the issues and recommend decisions about priorities among programs, budget guidance, and the like. Futures intelligence must be able to reach beyond current intelligence on military forces, weather, and terrain to offer planners some sense of the likely future in enough detail to be useful in framing issues, recommending priorities, and allocating budgets. Anticipation for Army intelligence involves the ability to manage surprise and warning, to spot innova-
tion, and to manage organizational problems associated with working with planners.

**Surprise and warning.** Surprise and warning has historically fallen victim to a number of classical errors, described in Appendix B. Fundamentally, the surprise and warning problem for futures intelligence boils down to three questions: Are there indications of future trouble that Army intelligence can sense in the present, can their implications for the Army be accurately understood, and can Army intelligence convince the long-range planners and senior leadership, on the basis of the available evidence, that the indications mean what the intelligence officials claim they do? The problem includes some very demanding elements—knowing what indications to watch for, sensing them accurately, understanding their implications, and convincing the long-range planners and senior leadership that the interpretation offered is correct. The problem is further complicated because Army intelligence is not the sole source or authority on the global security environment and the state of international affairs. Planners have access to a wide variety of other sources, both official, like the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute and the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, and contract studies performed by professional service corporations and universities, to name just a few. The surprise and warning problem thus involves not only carefully sensing the indications that are available, interpreting them objectively and understanding what they mean for the Army, but competing against a multitude of other views for credibility with the planners.

**Spotting innovation.** Innovation has historically been an important indication of change and thus figures prominently in any process that seeks to prevent surprise and provide warning. At least five factors influence the prospects for spotting technological, and especially military, innovations. Two of these have to do principally with technological progress, while the others deal more with culture, government, and political forces that shape and temper innovation. The first of the technological progress factors has been called the “butterfly effect” or the “pinball effect.”4 At their essence, both no-

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tions point to the cumulative effects of individually insignificant events and suggest that historically, apparently inconsequential developments have often led to militarily significant advances. Put another way, both terms have to do with unexpected consequences: the pinball that ricochets about and sets other things in the game in motion; the butterfly that, despite its small size and weight, nevertheless sets off a chain of events by landing on something sensitive.

The second technological progress factor is time lag. In a study of U.S. military systems from conception to production, researchers found that “innovation events” generally culminated 20 years before the engineering design data that ultimately produced a piece of hardware.5

The other forces influencing the ability to perceive innovation include national assessments of security and political guidance (which, among other things, control whether certain states and actors can be considered potential adversaries and accounted for in long-range plans), and regional-cultural expertise that would enable observers to gauge a society’s ability to innovate based upon its societal, cultural, economic, industrial, and educational capabilities and constraints.6

Managing organizational trouble. Army intelligence's suitability to support long-range planning is contingent in part on its ability to meet the demands for anticipation and forecasting of the planners and their planning system. Two classic errors—the quantitative fallacy, which focuses on quantifiable things solely because they are quantifiable, and the evidence gradient, which demands tougher standards of proof for undesirable outcomes—are more likely to lurk in official policies, such as approved methods for certain types of

estimates, or in the form of official scenarios that exclude some issues as unrealistic (i.e., the evidence gradient to make them credible is too steep). It is difficult to determine the degree to which these factors manifest themselves in specific intelligence products, since the products are not uniform in their methodological approaches. The writing style often favors asserting intelligence judgments without supplying a comprehensive logic for arriving at them. The decision-based planning approach, by requiring key assumptions to be stressed in unusual ways, could help reduce Army intelligence's potential vulnerability to these factors.

The organizational problems compound the problem of credible anticipation and forecasting because the organization of defense intelligence reflects so many of them. Single, authoritative estimates, centralization, and intelligence shaped by policymakers—the key sources of trouble in organizational factors noted earlier—are the norm. If Army intelligence is to be successful in supporting long-range planning, it will need procedural and organizational room to move: freedom to depart from the organizational attributes that dominate most of defense intelligence.

Many of the tough issues surrounding technological innovation may be beyond Army intelligence's capability to deal with them. The problems of the pinball effect and time lag between innovation and actual design make direct monitoring very difficult indeed. In most instances they may defy observation, placing a premium on Army intelligence's established skills in forecasting and trend analysis as a substitute approach to trying to monitor larger numbers of specific episodes of innovation. Another two problems, the content of national assessments and political guidance, are only marginally influenced by the Army. On the other hand, the ability to estimate how innovation will fare in a foreign state, and to appreciate how the state's societal, cultural, educational, economic, and industrial characteristics might support or impede innovation plays to the strong suit of Army intelligence's regional experts.

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7 Observation is further complicated by the fact that ODCSINT has more independent actors to watch. During the Cold War there were only a handful of troublemakers, with the Soviet Union at center stage. Today ODCSINT and its subordinate organizations must monitor over 60 countries.
CHAPTER OBSERVATIONS

At least three main points stand out. First, forecasting and trend analysis has an important role to play in compensating for the inability to monitor reliably modernization and innovation events. Second, Army intelligence’s capabilities do not fully satisfy long-range planning customers in large part because the communications channels between them have atrophied. Finally, ODCSINT experts have the potential to make important contributions to the Army, but only if they can be successfully connected to their customers and only if they can somehow manage the large amounts of information they must process.