

Intelligence — a serious business

Intelligence is serious business. No other service of the state calls for so much integrity, dedication, perception and knowledge as Intelligence demands. And no other service of the state is perhaps as risky.

Across the continents, overt and covert sources are continuously pouring information about military, economic, political and social matters through intelligence networks all over the world. People are sitting, huddled over laptops, listening devices, and other gadgetry, trying to decipher information. Experts are gleaning the print and the electronic media for political developments in different parts of the world, freedom struggles, military maneuvers and other activities of interest. Undercover agents and officials of different rank are plugged into foreign governments through paid or unpaid friends. If national interest dictates a regime change in a foreign country, all means are employed to achieve that objective. Intelligence agencies of super powers do this all the time.

There are aberrations to this, especially in the less developed countries where civil rights are not a major issue. And countries where intelligence operations are carried out for objectives other than protecting national interest, for retaining political power for example, social progress and development is retarded.

But great powers have to retain a worldview. Having knowledge is one thing, but making sense of that knowledge is quite another. In order to pro-

mote their global policy, super powers must have the full picture. And for that they must know what is going on in a country, however small.

The victory in the Second World War by the Allied Forces was made possible in a significant measure by the work of intelligence and counter intelligence operatives. Since then, the Americans have dominated the world scene in the field of intelligence. The end of the Cold War between them and the Soviets, resulting in the breakup of the Soviet Union, is owed almost entirely to the work of American intelligence.

Pakistan has been a close ally of the US from the very beginning. We have had defense pacts and treaties with them and we have subsisted on their economic and military aid.

But after 9/11, this relationship is reaching new heights. Pakistan is now a critical partner of the US in the war against terror. It has become a "non NATO ally" of the US, a status to which the Foreign Office attaches great importance. There is unprecedented cooperation in the field of training and operations between the two governments and their respective law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies.

The Americans run a very sophisticated intelligence system, which is under constant review. Officially, the American Intelligence Community consists of 15 different agencies, with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

BY WAJAHAT LATIF

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After the Second World War, the advancement in technology radically changed the outlook on intelligence collection and counter intelligence activity. Dependence on human beings for espionage diminished and technical aids of collecting information began to be increasingly used. But, dependence on technology has not reduced the importance of human intelligence. The interpretation of the electronic and satellite data, continues to be in the hands of men who punch the keys board.

But human intelligence has regained importance after 9/11. The attacks in 2001 exposed several flaws in the US intelligence network.

Among other things, Americans realized the cost of neglecting human intelligence. There were other failures too, as pointed out in the 9/11 Commission report, after which a major reorganization of the intelligence services became a compulsion.

Recently, the American President signed legislation "authorizing the largest overhaul of American intelligence services in 50 years". The bill creates a post of a National Director who will oversee the work of all 15 intelligence agencies, including the CIA, the FBI and National Security Agency (NSA). "A key lesson of Sept. 11", George Bush said, "is that America's intelligence agencies must work together as a single, unified enterprise..."

Also, the Department of Defense is demanding greater role in intelligence collection for the military on new issues emerging as the result of the war on terror, a new kind of war. If the new powers the DOD wants are legislated, the world will have to take notice since no country can afford to ignore developments in the American intelligence system on account of the political and military sweep that country possesses over the rest of the world. No amount of noise in the press, for example, is going to prevent the American intelligence from hauling Al-Qaida suspects long distances in unmarked executive jets for questioning and interrogation.

In the sketchy scenario above, where

do we stand? At the national level we have the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Military Intelligence (MI), the Air Intelligence and the Naval Intelligence. No one knows what they do, what their vision is, what their mission is and what their values are.

Most people who come into contact with them have reservations about their professional skills, but their constant interference in people's lives is hated universally, particularly in the smaller provinces. And all the flak of this hatred is coming on the military because military officers head all these agencies. Of this flak, the Army takes the most, as an Army General heads the ISI, which is perceived to be the most intrusive.

It is surprising that a reorganization of the intelligence services in the country has still not found a way into President Musharraf's perestroika and glasnost. On the issues of governance and politics, such a reform is of the utmost importance if a harmonious social development in various regions of the country is to be achieved.

Let the "agencies" open up to some kind of scrutiny. This will give them some credibility and diminish the public resentment against them. The cloak and dagger stuff is not justified but all in a day's work in the murky world of intelligence. But if the intelligence services are seen to be operating within the law and not so intrusive in the life of a decent citizen, people will begin to understand it.

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