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## II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

# NSA Was Right: CIA Was Not

## Challenges in Understanding What Went Wrong before the 1973 Arab-Israeli War

by Gary B. Keeley

The role of U.S. intelligence before the 1973 Arab-Israeli War has been studied intensively with the essential facts remaining unchanged for decades: CIA analysts and US policymakers, following their own and Israeli inclinations, discounted the likelihood that Egypt and Syria would attack Israel in 1973. They were wrong and the attack surprised them.

### NSA CERTAIN OF EGYPTIAN ATTACK PLANS, RECENT DOCUMENTS CONFIRM

A key aspect of US intelligence ahead of the war remains poorly-studied, however, although it has been mentioned periodically in both general and anecdotal terms.

The National Security Agency (NSA) reached the conclusion not later than September 1973 that the Egyptians would attack Israel in early October. NSA was the only US entity not surprised by the October attack, although the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) earlier in the year had suggested that an attack at some point was likely.[1]

This matters not because NSA's reporting altered US policy – it did not – but because the episode reveals the misunderstandings and miscommunications between CIA and NSA. If one is to understand how the 1973 intelligence failure might have been avoided, and how SIGINT might have been used in other moments, one must study how intelligence was handled before the war in more detail than has been possible. With more recent NSA declassifications, this is becoming a little easier.

In 2013, NSA re-released volume III of its four-volume internal history, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989*, the only history of US SIGINT informed by a vast array of still-classified NSA records, including records about the 1973 war.[2] Following the 2013 release, but likely not coordinated with it, NSA in 2014 released two short historical articles specifically about the 1973 war.[3]

These three releases add detail and nuance to what is known about the nature of US intelligence before the war. They do not alter the well-worn narrative of the 1973 intelligence failure, but reveal more about NSA's awareness of the impending attack and the failure of CIA to accept NSA's reporting and interpretation of intercepted signals. The three releases shed light on the nature of NSA's reporting and the relationships before the war between NSA and recipients of its reporting.

The records that NSA declassified in 2013 and 2014 reveal that NSA was confident that signals intercepts pointed to an imminent attack by the Egyptians, and that NSA took what was at that time the unusual step of sending a briefer to CIA to warn all-source analysts who had either not accepted or had not understood the voluminous SIGINT reporting. The records now available allow a more detailed, albeit still incomplete, understanding of NSA's activities prior to the war.

1. William Burr."A Clear View from Foggy Bottom: How State Department Analysts – and no one else – foresaw the 1973 Arab-Israeli War," Foreign Policy, March 5, 2013. Also, William Burr, "State Department Intelligence and Research Predicted 1973 Arab-Israeli War: Key INR Memo Published for the First Time," The National Security Archive, March 5, 2013. https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB415/.

2. Thomas R. Johnson. *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989. Book III: Retrenchment and Reform, 1972-1980.* See Chapter 18: "The Middle East and the Yom Kippur War." Ft. Meade, MD, NSA Center for Cryptologic History, 1998. This was redacted and approved for release by NSA on 9 July 2007 and again on 26 July 2013. The 2013 re-release, with the additional final paragraph of chapter 18 that was withheld in the 2007 release, is the version cited here. Chapter 18 runs from page 175 to 187. All four of Johnson's declassified volumes are available at *www.nsa.gov* in the original format with charts, maps, figures and source notes included, except where redacted. All four volumes, including the version of volume III and its chapter 18 on the Yom Kippur War re-released in 2013, are findable on the Web. Search for "American Cryptology during the Cold War."

3. See note 1 for Johnson's history. For the two articles released by NSA in 2014: Author's name redacted. "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part One," and "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part Two," in *Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series*, Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, July-August 2002. Redacted and approved by NSA for release on 14 April 2014. *https://www.nsa.gov/news-features/declassified-documents/crypto-almanac-50th/* Scroll down to 2002, then to Jul-Aug to locate the two declassified Yom Kippur War articles.

A well-known postmortem study hinted at NSA's contributions, but the bulk of it continues to be withheld,[4] as does almost all of the pertinent NSA reporting and after-action studies conducted by NSA after the war.

Although almost all of the primary source NSA SIGINT reports from the period before the war remain classified, a 1977 article reviewing CIA's postmortem program highlights the large number of reports processed and disseminated to all-source analysts before the war. The article asserts that analysts had to contend with "thousands of individual collection reports from the Department of State, CIA, DIA, NSA."[5]

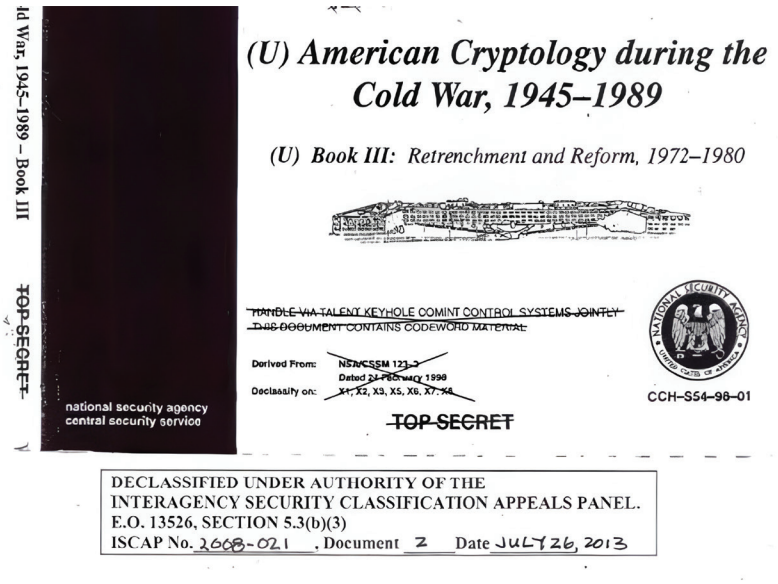
By "individual," the authors of the postmortem referred to specific, discrete, fact-based reports. Few of those "thousands" of prewar reports have been declassified. Such reports from State, CIA, DIA and NSA were the foundational building blocks of all intelligence, not just 1973 war intelligence. They are better understood today as "single-source" reports, rather than "raw," because the issuing agencies managed and regulated them to ensure that they were fact-based, well-written, heavily reviewed, numbered (serialized), carefully-and rapidly-disseminated to security-cleared customers of intelligence and finally archived and preserved. Those issued by NSA in the years prior to the 1973 war, however, probably were truly "raw" and more difficult for analysts to synthesize than were reports in later years.

During the Cold War, the Intelligence Community (IC) invested heavily in its dissemination systems because policymakers and intelligence professionals saw little point in collecting intelligence if it could not be delivered to customers in a timely manner. It is likely, therefore, that most CIA, DIA and Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) all-source military analysts saw most of the "thousands" of single-source reports before the war in 1973. The postmortem included complaints by analysts that they had not seen all of the SIGINT and that it was not clear from what they saw that war was imminent, but enough analysts would have seen enough of the reporting to have understood its implications had they been inclined. As well, some policymakers probably read at least a few of the more informative prewar single-source reports.

The postmortem and many classified and unclassified studies since the war have repeatedly affirmed that the primary impediment to accepting NSA and, to a lesser degree, CIA reporting was a mindset among analysts and policymakers that the Arabs would not attack. The detailed and rapidly-disseminated NSA reports were unable to persuade them that the reality of Arab preparations for war differed from their perceptions.

Even without the "thousands" of reports that remain classified, the NSA releases in 2013 and 2014 now allow scholars to further their understanding of the reporting issued by NSA before the war.

**Figure 1**




## INTERNAL NSA HISTORY STATES THAT NSA KNEW WAR WAS IMMINENT IN 1973

Chapter 18 of volume III of the NSA history, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989*, addresses the 1973 war.[6] Readers should immediately notice

4. DCI Memorandum, prepared by the Intelligence Community Staff, "The Performance of the Intelligence Community before the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973: A Preliminary Post-Mortem Report," December 1973, p. 1. This was a 32-page study that was redacted and released in June 2006 with this number: DOC_0001331142920. Find it by searching for the title and following that link to the report at cia.gov. While the report states that the intelligence was "not conclusive," NSA clearly disagreed.

5. Richard W. Shryock. "The Intelligence Community Post-Mortem Program, 1973-1975." *Studies in Intelligence* Vol. 21 No. 3, Fall 1977, 17. *https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78t03194a000400010015-5*. CIA-RDP78T03194A000400010015-5. Redacted and released by CIA on 18 April 2005.

6. Johnson. *American Cryptology*

that the chapter on the war reveals little about NSA SIGINT operations, reporting or contributions before or during the war. Unsurprisingly, anything related to sources and methods that NSA continues to assess might harm US equities and capabilities has not been declassified. The fact, however, that the history devotes an entire chapter to the 1973 war suggests that NSA contributed significantly in ways not fully-apparent from the declassified text nor from the brief and general discussions about SIGINT included in earlier studies, investigations and histories, including the 1976 Pike Committee Report.[7]

The NSA history offers a few nuggets even in the heavily-redacted version that NSA released. A mysterious subheading on page 179, "The Bunker Briefing," appears in the midst of an otherwise entirely redacted two and a half pages that are followed by a subsection entitled "The Attack."[8] Something worth discussing, and involving someone or someplace named "Bunker" or a "physical bunker" and a "briefing," seems to have occurred or been important in some way prior to the Egyptian attack and warranted considerable text in the official history of NSA.

**Figure 2**

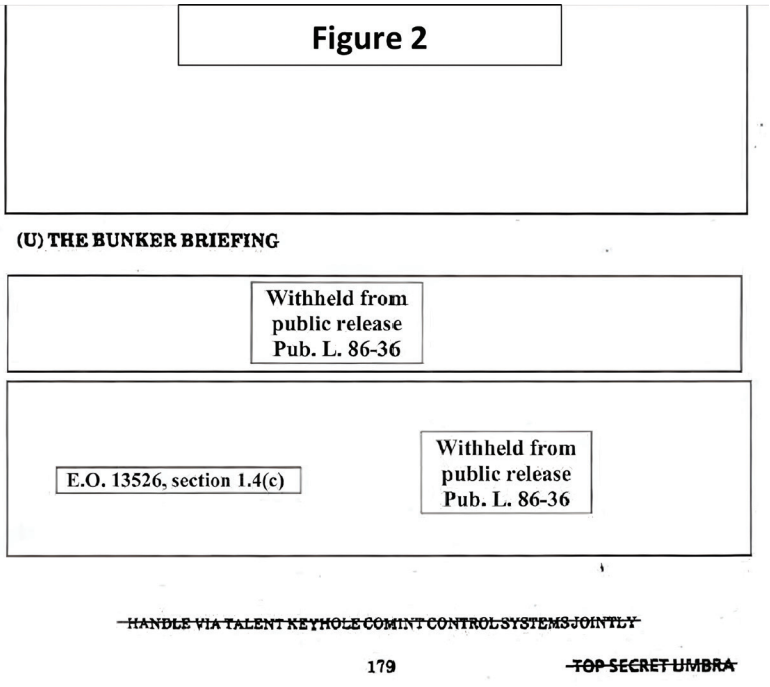
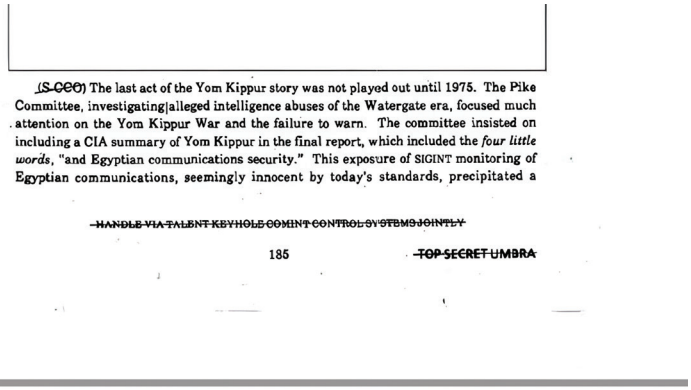



**Figure 3**


(S-CCO) The last act of the Yom Kippur story was not played out until 1975. The Pike Committee, investigating alleged intelligence abuses of the Watergate era, focused much attention on the Yom Kippur War and the failure to warn. The committee insisted on including a CIA summary of Yom Kippur in the final report, which included the *four little words*, "and Egyptian communications security." This exposure of SIGINT monitoring of Egyptian communications, seemingly innocent by today's standards, precipitated a

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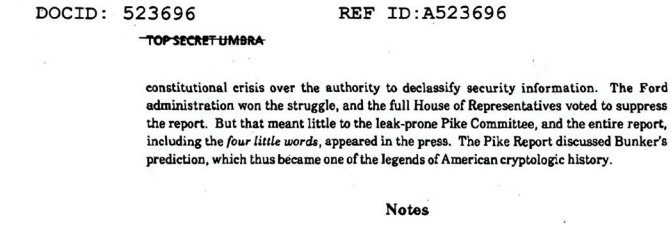
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constitutional crisis over the authority to declassify security information. The Ford administration won the struggle, and the full House of Representatives voted to suppress the report. But that meant little to the leak-prone Pike Committee, and the entire report, including the *four little words*, appeared in the press. The Pike Report discussed Bunker's prediction, which thus became one of the legends of American cryptologic history.

Notes

The final paragraph in Book III, chapter 18 of the 2013 release of the NSA history, includes information that had been redacted in NSA's 2007 release of the history: "The Pike Report discussed Bunker's prediction, which thus became one of the legends of American cryptologic history."

Here, "Bunker" again appears, in addition to the subheading "The Bunker Briefing" mentioned earlier, and is shown to be a person associated with a "prediction" that became a "legend" among at least those at NSA.

This briefing will appear again below in connection with the two brief historical overviews that NSA declassified in 2014 but, briefly, one finds that the word "Bunker" does not occur in an abbreviated version nor in the complete Pike Report. The Village Voice version of the report does record that, after an apparently large volume of NSA reporting, "hundreds of reports each week," had been ignored by all-source analysts, NSA sent a briefer to CIA: "...Two days before the war, an NSA briefer insisted...that unusual Arab movements suggested imminent hostilities...."[9]

7. A version of the classified US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, known as the "Pike Committee," report was leaked and published in *The Village Voice*, "The Report on the CIA that President Ford Doesn't Want You to Read," Vol. XXI No. 7, 16 February 1976, subsection 3, "The Mid-East War: The System Breaks Down," in a version from CIA's archives that was reviewed for marginalia and approved for release on 20 November 2012. CIA-RDP03-01541R000200420004-8.

8. Johnson. *American Cryptology*, pp. 179-181.

9. Pike committee report, subsection 3, page 78, in a version from

NSA did not base its assessment entirely on "unusual Arab movements." Both a prewar CIA analytic summary and later the Pike Report that cites the CIA summary mention changes in Egyptian communications security. That the CIA summary included the fact of increased Egyptian communications security suggests that NSA had highlighted to CIA those changes as an indicator of imminent hostilities. The available records do not explain the technical reasons for NSA's concerns but NSA's expertise in SIGINT would have included communications protocols. However, whatever alarmed NSA about Egyptian military movements and, especially, Egyptian communications modifications in September was apparently too arcane for all-source analysts, who interpreted anything NSA reported as further evidence of an exercise.

The Pike Report, as it appears in the *Village Voice* in 1976, summarizes NSA's role but offers no details:

> "In late September, the National Security Agency began picking up clear signs that Egypt and Syria were preparing for a major offensive. NSA information indicated that [a major foreign nation] had become extremely sensitive to the prospect of war and concerned about their citizens and dependents in Egypt. NSA's warnings escaped the serious attention of most intelligence analysts responsible for the Middle East."[10]

The NSA history records that both CIA and Pike had complained that NSA sent too many reports, "an average of 200 reports each week" about Egyptian and Syrian preparations for war, a volume so large "that few analysts had time to digest more than a small portion of them." The history also quotes the Pike Report as concluding "that NSA frequently had the right answers, but that customers probably did not fully understand what NSA was really saying."[11] This assessment seems both insightful and worrying because it reveals cultural, structural and interpretive gaps between intelligence producers and consumers. NSA and CIA existed in different conceptual worlds, had headquarters 35 miles apart in a pre-internet world and understood SIGINT differently.

## TWO NSA ARTICLES RELEASED IN 2014 CLARIFY NSA'S PREWAR ROLE

NSA released the two most recent pieces of the puzzle in 2014 in two short historical overviews written originally for NSA staff on the 50th anniversary of NSA in 2002.[12]

**Figure 4**

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**(U) Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series**

**(U) The Yom Kippur War of 1973**

**Part One**

The first short article reveals an exchange between NSA and CIA about the likelihood of war between the Arabs and Israel in 1973. The article seems to shine a light on "The Bunker Briefing" and on the person named "Bunker," and talks of a young, female NSA officer whose name is redacted and who "was a talented and convincing briefer."

**Figure 5**

**(U) Those Who Have Ears, But Will Not Hear...**

(S//SI) was a Special Research Intern assigned to (the Office of Middle East and North Africa) only a few weeks before . While no expert on the Middle East, she was a talented and convincing briefer, and she had a core of experts to support her. chief of staff, had been convinced early on that

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

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(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

war was imminent, and as events unfolded in September, more and more analysts came to believe that hostilities were in the offing. However, they had no vehicle to get their views on record, because NSCID-6 specifically prohibited NSA from producing "finished intelligence," the evaluative reports which would be taken as "intelligence." became as convinced as the others, and her skills as a briefer were the way to get the word out. NSA decided that she would brief the information to the intelligence community. faced a skeptical audience on 4 October. CIA had become concerned about Egyptian and Syrian activities in mid-September.

E.O. 1.4.(c)
E.O. 1.4.(d)
OGA

(S//SI) had more evidence to offer --

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

Just as importantly, an unidentified NSA "... chief of staff had been convinced early on that war

CIA's archives that was reviewed for marginalia and approved for release on 20 November 2012. CIA-RDP03-01541R000200420004-8.

10. Ibid.

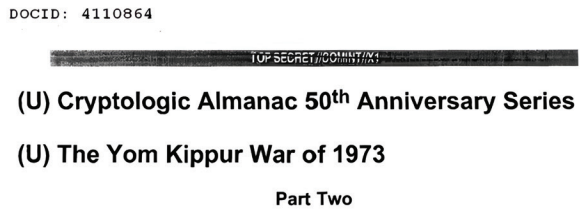
11. Johnson. *American Cryptology*, p. 97.

12. Author redacted. "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part One," and "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part Two," in *Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series*, Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, July-August 2002. Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 14 April 2014. *https://www.nsa.gov/news-features/declassified-documents/crypto-almanac-50th/* Scroll down to 2002, then to Jul-Aug to locate the two declassified Yom Kippur War articles.

was imminent, and as events unfolded in September, more and more [redacted] analysts came to believe that hostilities were in the offing."[13] While the article does not supply a time frame for "early on," the context in figure 5 implies that serious worries of war were accepted within NSA by mid – or late-September. Without detailed NSA records, it is difficult to know when NSA concluded that war was imminent nor is it possible to understand what the specific intercepts and communications changes signaled to NSA about Egyptian plans. What is known is that those processing this material at NSA were technical and linguistic experts, who worked with these signals daily, and reached their conclusions based on technical understanding of communications equipment and processes, as well as the content of intercepted messages, and knowledge of Egyptian communications security practices. The all-source analysts at CIA were not such experts.

NSA apparently became desperate enough when, by early October, its customers were still not heeding its reporting, to take the then-unusual step of sending a briefer to persuade CIA analysts that NSA knew war was imminent.

**Figure 6**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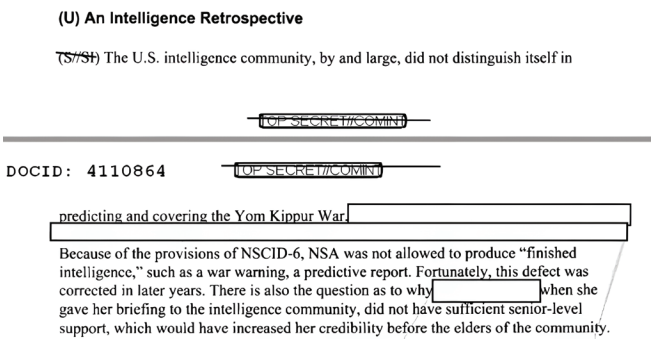
**(U) Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series**

**(U) The Yom Kippur War of 1973**

**Part Two**

The revelations from the short NSA articles declassified in 2014 do not end there. Sometime later, a follow-up about the 1973 war was published in the same venue. "Part Two" is focused more on NSA's activities during the 1973 war, rather than before, but revisits the prewar period, lamenting that National Security Council Intelligence Directive 6 (NSCID-6) had prevented NSA from effectively warning of war.[14] Figure 7 shows the brief discussion about NSCID-6 and returns to the briefer's failed effort to convince CIA analysts that NSA had assessed that the Egyptians were about to attack.[15]

**Figure 7**


**(U) An Intelligence Retrospective**

~~(S//SI)~~ The U.S. intelligence community, by and large, did not distinguish itself in

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predicting and covering the Yom Kippur War.

Because of the provisions of NSCID-6, NSA was not allowed to produce "finished intelligence," such as a war warning, a predictive report. Fortunately, this defect was corrected in later years. There is also the question as to why when she gave her briefing to the intelligence community, did not have sufficient senior-level support, which would have increased her credibility before the elders of the community.

The last line in figure 7 implies that NSA in the 1970s typically did not send briefers to analysts. At the time, the momentous nature of the situation probably was not recognized by senior NSA managers the way it is decades later. It was not NSA's mission to prepare all-source analysis nor, probably, to brief even during special situations. NSA's mission was to provide SIGINT reporting to analysts and policy customers who decided how to use NSA's product. That NSA chose to send a briefer at all appears to be, in itself, an unusual move. In retrospect, it appears that senior NSA managers erred in not sending a senior-level delegation to CIA along with the young briefer.

These two articles review NSA activities very briefly. Nevertheless, when combined with the 2013 re-release of the NSA history's volume III, they demonstrate that NSA had conclusively determined from SIGINT that war was imminent. These materials also confirm that NSA's SIGINT-based assessments were not accepted by NSA's customers. Former senior NSA manager Norman Klar confirmed this in 2004 when he recalled in a self-published memoir that CIA analysts had rejected NSA's SIGINT-based evidence, opting instead to believe that the Arabs would not be "stupid enough" to begin hostilities.[16]

This echoes the NSA history, cited above, that states that NSA had "examined the individual parts of the puzzle, then assembled it into a whole."[17] The NSA history asserts, and Klar appears to agree, that NSA assembled evidence that the analysts dismissed because of their presumption that the Arabs would not dare begin a war they could not win. It seems that whatever reporting vehicles NSA was using to disseminate intelligence were unable to account for the intuitive sense among NSA linguists and reporters

13. "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part One," pp. 3-4.

14. Section 4 of National Security Council Intelligence Directive 6 (NSCID-6), "Signals Intelligence," revised and effective as of 17 February 1972 details NSA responsibilities for SIGINT. *https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nscid-6.pdf*.

15. "The Yom Kippur War of 1973: Part Two," p. 3.

16. Norman Klar, *Confessions of a Codebreaker* (Tales from Decrypt). Privately-published, 2004, p. 280. Klar is cited by Matthew Aid, *The Secret Sentry: The Untold History of the National Security Agency*. Bloomsbury Press, 2009, p. 157.

17. Johnson. *American Cryptology*, p. 184.

that something in September 1973 was different than in previous exercises. NSA saw it, but CIA did not

A close reading of the declassified records suggests that NSA's strict adherence to the intercept and its technical understanding of communications protocols may have been too arcane for all-source analysts to understand or to accept as the basis for a significant modification of the analytic line. A chagrined NSA may have seen its role before the war as a bittersweet moment. NSA succeeded; it was correct. But because it was unable to persuade CIA, it became part of the overall failure to warn of war.

Corroboration for the story told by the several declassified NSA records is also available occasionally in other non-NSA primary sources. For example, British participants asserted that the British SIGINT agency, General Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), interpreted prewar SIGINT similarly to NSA, although this source gives an early October date for GCHQ concerns rather than NSA's September date:

> "By the first few days of October, the increase in signals traffic between [the Egyptians and Soviets] had become 'so heavy that [British Colonel John Davies, a manager of Middle East all-source analysts on the Joint Intelligence Committee] became convinced that an attack was imminent.... The pattern of SIGINT all that week was such as to leave [Colonel Davies]...in little doubt that it was traffic and not deception.'"[18]

The article adds that Davies, as an all-source analyst, had been "a lone voice in the wilderness," a fact DCI William Colby also later acknowledged.[19] This vignette is significant because, while many at NSA (and probably at GCHQ also) understood from SIGINT that war was imminent, no US all-source analysts did. In the UK, on the other hand, at least one analyst – Davies – did comprehend the SIGINT, although he, like the NSA reporting and the NSA briefer, was ignored.

A lesson that the IC may have taken from this episode is that all-source analysts needed better training in SIGINT and that NSA reporting could be made more useful by changing the format of the reports. The second short article states, in figure 7, that the limitations that prevented NSA's assessments were removed to some degree after the war. How NSA altered its reporting and whether CIA and other analysts improved their understanding of SIGINT reporting is extremely important to the understanding of the role of SIGINT in all episodes after the 1973 war but is beyond the scope of this article and will require additional declassifications.

## ACKNOWLEDGING THE "MISSING DIMENSION" – 1973 WAR INTELLIGENCE AN EXAMPLE OF THOUSANDS OF SIMILAR MOMENTS

Complete collections of declassified records matter. The re-released NSA history and the short historical articles remind inquirers that the 1973 warning failure and many other Cold War era successes and failures probably are incompletely understood without the official declassification of the majority of the primary sources. This has not yet occurred for any Cold War era event, even for the otherwise well-studied 1973 war. If questions persist about intelligence in the 1973 war, far more and fundamental questions remain for almost all other episodes in which intelligence played a role.[20]

The "missing dimension," famously-popularized by Christopher Andrew and David Dilks,[21] has moderated somewhat since they recognized the phenomenon in 1984, but even for the Cold War cannot be eliminated until many more records are declassified. Their definition of what was absent from the historical record was not restricted to intelligence activities such as covert action nor to knowledge about intelligence agencies separate from policy but extended to the use made by policymakers of intelligence.

18. Dina Rezk. "Re-evaluating the Yom Kippur 'Intelligence Failure'" The Cultural Lens in Crisis." *The International History Review* Vol. 39, No. 3, 2016, pp. 487-488

19. CIA Historical Collections Division, CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence History Staff, The Richard Nixon Foundation, and the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. *President Nixon and the Role of Intelligence in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, held at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA, 30 January 2013, pp. 21, 25. This collection – both the articles and the summary of the records declassified for the conference – offers a sound understanding of the state of 1973 war studies as of 2013.

20. Another example of how belated declassifications can later change the perception of a crisis is the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. Conferences years later with Russian, Cuban, and US participants revealed significant intelligence gaps. See Regis D. Heitchue, *When Intelligence Made a Difference: The Cuban Missile Crisis, 60 Years Later, 2022*, an AFIO monograph at *https://www.afio.com/publications/monographs/HEITCHUE_The_Cuban_Missile_Crisis_Monograph_2022.pdf*. See pp. 159-168. And often preliminary analyses result in false, but popular, conclusions, as the widely held belief that the U-2 discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962. In fact, earlier clandestine HUMINT reporting prompted the U-2 overflights. See Gary B. Keeley, "HUMINT Reports Raised Suspicions about Soviet Missiles in Cuba," Association of Former Intelligence Officers, *The Intelligencer*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Summer/Fall 2022, pp. 53-9.

21. Christopher Andrew, David Dilks, eds. *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984, p. 1.

Despite the flood of academic articles and books about intelligence since 1984, the missing dimension, by definition, continues to exist given the extremely large gaps in the public record concerning the role and impact of intelligence, and not just US intelligence, in thousands of historical crises and routine events alike throughout the Cold War and beyond. Almost any event on any timeline probably saw intelligence collection, reporting, analysis and briefings by US and non-US intelligence entities. History has been written about many of those events, but the intelligence aspects of those moments are rarely featured in journalistic and academic studies.

Everyone who studies intelligence is keenly-aware that many, probably most, intelligence records remain classified as are the ways in which policymakers and officials used intelligence. What may be less clear is that the primary sources comprise not only the all-source analysis but the single-source reporting from several collection agencies and from which, along with open source reporting, all-source analyses were built.

To understand this aspect of the pre-1973 war intelligence failure better scholars will one day need to study the "hundreds of reports" that the Pike Report stated NSA had issued to customers "each week" before the war, or at least study any NSA-authored internal after-actions as well as the complete IC postmortem.[22] Still mostly unanswerable are questions such as these:

- How many SIGINT reports about Egypt and Syria did NSA and GCHQ issue in September and early October 1973?
- What did these SIGINT reports say?
- As well, (although outside the scope here) what did the HUMINT and IMINT reports say?
- How many CIA, DIA and INR analysts saw the NSA and GCHQ reports?
- Did some policymakers read some of the SIGINT reports? Which policymakers? Which reports?
- What was the response of those who read the prewar reports? (This is known for the 1973 war, at least in broad terms.)
- When did NSA officers begin to suspect that the Egyptians were not exercising?
- What was it about Egyptian communications changes that NSA appeared to find so significant that it concluded war was imminent?
- Why was only a relatively junior briefer sent to CIA and why only on 4 October?
- What did NSA contribute to the IC postmortem?
- After the war, did CIA and NSA communicate about the failure?
- Did CIA and NSA agree or disagree that NSA had warned CIA?
- Did NSA alter its reporting after the war to make it more understandable to analysts who had little or no expertise in SIGINT? If so, how?
- Did all-source analysts receive more training in SIGINT?
- Did all-source analysts handle SIGINT differently in the years after 1973?

Questions similar to the first six of these, and variations of the others, should be asked about almost all historical events, many of which may have been studied much less intensively than the 1973 war or for which no postmortems or after-action reports were written.

For many such episodes, probably nothing at all is known outside of presidential libraries and the archives and history staffs of intelligence and foreign affairs agencies about what intelligence was collected, which officials saw it and how they employed it. Historians cannot fully explain events – cannot finalize an understanding of causation – without knowing far more about the role and impact of intelligence in each and every event on the timeline than they do now. Too much detailed information remains classified to allow confident assessments.

The extremely long lag time between event and the declassification of enough records to understand what transpired is, unfortunately, the reality of studying the role of intelligence in foreign and military affairs. This means, then, that what is known about the decisions of policymakers is incomplete. What they did is understood, however, the reasons that brought them to many of their decisions remain obscured by the missing intelligence records.

Notwithstanding the availability of intelligence and policy records in non-intelligence archives, often called "adjacent archives" by scholars, it is important to be modest about what is known and can be known about the role of intelligence and the decision-making process of officials who were consumers of intelligence. The 1973 war is but one example of thousands of instances where scholars must be cautious.

22. Pike Committee report, subsection 3, p. 78.

Definitive assessments cannot be made until many more internal cables, telegrams, memoranda, studies, briefings, all-source analyses, single-source reports, after-action studies and various other record "types" are declassified by many agencies in many nations. Broad conclusions about the role and value of intelligence in foreign and military affairs remain provisional in the absence of the majority of the primary source record.

Caveat lector.

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This article has been reviewed by CIA and NSA and found not to contain any classified materials.