
210. Editorial Note

On July 18, 1970, President Nixon met with his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to discuss the situation in Southeast Asia and Cambodia in particular. The President expressed his displeasure with the quality of U.S. intelligence on Cambodia and asked the Board to look very carefully into the entire background of the intelligence community's misreading of the importance of Sihanoukville as an entry point for Communist supplies in Cambodia. He then made the following comments, according to the minutes: "The President said there is a tendency in CIA to 'a muted kind of thinking.' He said that he simply cannot put up with people lying to the President of the United States about intelligence. If intelligence is inadequate or if the intelligence depicts a bad situation, he wants to know it and he will not stand being served warped evaluations. He said that an equally bad performance by the intelligence community was its assessments of Soviet ABM developments. The President stated that the United States is spending a total

of about [*dollar amount not declassified*] per year on intelligence and it deserves to receive a lot more for its money than it has been getting.

He does not expect the intelligence community to provide the President with proposed courses of action; that is a function for the National Security Council. He does, however, expect the community to present objective intelligence with an indication of majority and minority views where such exist. He said that he understands that the intelligence community has been bitten badly a few times and thus tends to make its reports as bland as possible so that it won't be bitten again. The result is that many reports are completely meaningless. There is another tendency which appears from time to time in the community, viz., the penchant for presenting facts or writing reports designed to fit a preconceived philosophy, e.g., to justify a bombing halt if, in the writer's personal views, such an action is warranted. The President recognized that this tendency is sometimes a subconscious one and that there are people of varying philosophies, e.g., hawks and doves, in the intelligence community as well as the other segments of government. On the other hand, the slanting of intelligence reports is sometimes deliberate and the President feels that the playing down of the importance of Sihanoukville may have been such a case. Sometimes, he said, the authors of these reports do not actually lie; instead, they slant the report in such a way that their personal points of view receive extra emphasis. He believes that those responsible for the deliberate distortion of an intelligence report should be fired. He suggested that the time may be coming when he will have to read the riot act to the entire intelligence community." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Agency Files, Box 276, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Volume IV, 1 May 70–31 July 70)