



SECURITY &
DEMOCRACY
FORUM

Intro to Intelligence: What You Need to Know to Be Useful

How the IC Works and How Congress Interacts with It

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Course Objectives

- Understand the structure and authorities of the Intelligence Community
- Learn the basics of EO 12333, Title 50, and Section 702
- Understand clearance levels and compartmentation
- Recognize Congress's role in IC oversight
- Gain best practices for engaging with the IC effectively



Why Intelligence Matters

- Intelligence as a critical input to national security decisions
- Common myths vs. realities about the IC
- What early-career staffers often get wrong

The Intelligence Community Structure

- 18 IC elements under ODNI coordination
- Civilian (CIA, NSA, NGA, FBI) vs. military (DIA, service intel) components
- Integration and information sharing



ODNI's Role

- Created after 9/11 to integrate IC efforts
- National Intelligence Strategy
- Coordination vs. operational control





Legal Authorities: EO 12333 & Title 50

- EO 12333: primary authority for foreign collection
- Title 50: statutory framework for national intelligence
- Difference from Title 10 military operations

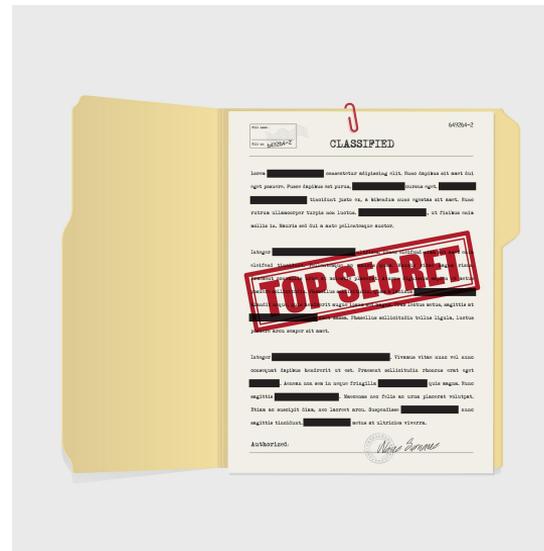
Surveillance Authorities: Section 702 & FISA

- Section 702 basics: targeting non-U.S. persons overseas
- Minimization & incidental collection
- FISA Court process and oversight



Security Clearances

- Clearance levels: Confidential, Secret, Top Secret
- SCI & SAP compartments
- “Need to know” principle
- Handling classified materials



Compartmentation in Practice

- How compartments restrict access
- Why it matters for collaboration
- Common pitfalls for new clearance holders

Oversight of the IC

- HPSCI & SSCI: jurisdiction and powers
- Role of Armed Services and Judiciary Committees
- IGs within the IC
- Presidential Intelligence Advisory Board (PIAB)



The Intelligence Cycle

- Requirements → Collection → Processing → Analysis → Dissemination → Feedback
- Where Congress interacts with the cycle
- Example: policymaker briefings

Intelligence in Decision-Making

- How intel informs defense, diplomacy, and crisis response
- Intel as input, not directive
- Policy influence on collection priorities



Working with the IC

- How to request intelligence products
- Reading and interpreting analysis
- Asking for context and alternative views
- Building relationships with agency liaisons

Case Study

- Example: Ukraine invasion forecasts or Bin Laden raid prep
- How IC analysis shaped policy choices
- Lessons on capabilities and limits



Best Practices for Early-Career Professionals

- Be precise in requests
- Handle classification meticulously
- Question assumptions without undermining trust
- Respect IC culture and constraints



Common Pitfalls

- Over Reliance on intelligence without policy context
- Mishandling classified information
- Misinterpreting probability language (“likely,” “possible”)
- Failing to follow up on information gaps

Key Takeaways & Questions

- Summary of the IC's role, authorities, and oversight
- Open Q&A
- Invite to take other related modules (Economic Statecraft, Appropriations Basics)