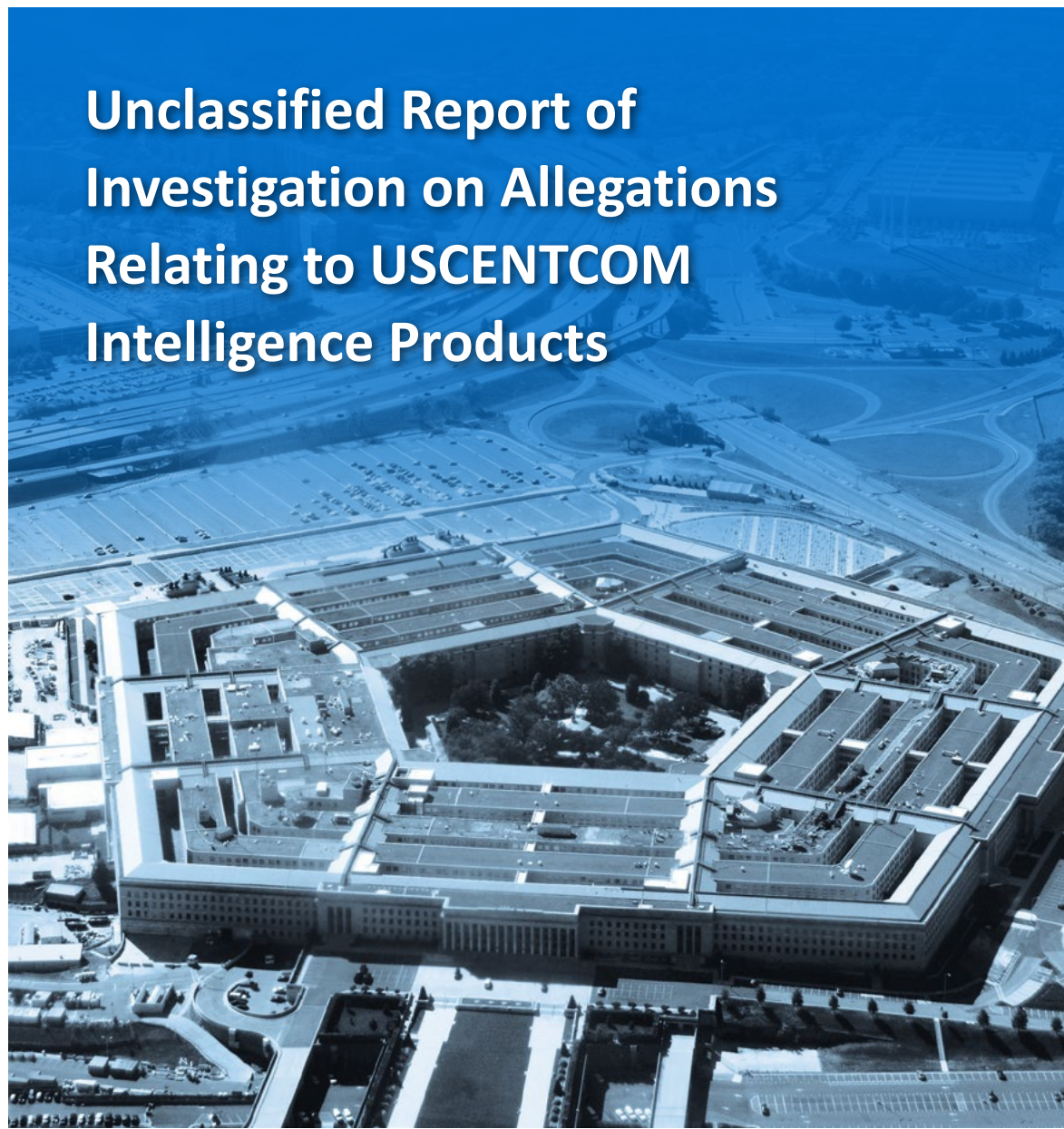




INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

JANUARY 31, 2017



Unclassified Report of Investigation on Allegations Relating to USCENTCOM Intelligence Products

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Frequently Used Acronyms

AOR	Area of Responsibility	JAAT	Middle East Extremist Branch
CCIR	Commander's Critical Information Requirements	JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
CCJ2	USCENTCOM Intelligence Directorate	JIC	Joint Intelligence Center
CCJ3	USCENTCOM Operations Directorate	JICCENT	Joint Intelligence Center USCENTCOM
CCJ5	USCENTCOM Strategy, Plans and Policy Directorate	JIOC	Joint Intelligence Operations Center
CDU	Commander's Daily Update	JWICS	Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communication System
CEIH	Commander's Executive Intelligence Highlights	MARC	Middle East Africa Regional Center
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
COG	centers of gravity	NGA	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency	NIC	National Intelligence Council
DID	Defense Intelligence Digest	NSA	National Security Agency
DISL	Defense Intelligence Senior Leader	NSC	National Security Council
DNI	Director of National Intelligence	OAG	Operational Assessment Group
FFIR	Friendly Force Information Requirement	ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
ICD	Intelligence Community Directive	OE	Operational Environment
IFC	Intelligence Fusion Center	OIR	Operation INHERENT RESOLVE
IMINT	Imagery Intelligence	OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
INTSUM	Intelligence Summary	PDB	President's Daily Brief
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces	VTC	Video Teleconference
J2	Intelligence Directorate of a Joint Staff	WATCHCON	Watch Condition
J3	Operations Directorate of a Joint Staff		
JAA	Near East Division		
JAAL	Levant Branch		
JAAQ	Iraq Branch		



UNCLASSIFIED REPORT OF INVESTIGATION ON ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO USCENTCOM INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) initiated this investigation to address allegations that senior intelligence officials Major General (MG) Steven Grove, U.S. Army, Director of Intelligence (J2), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM); Mr. Gregory Ryckman, Senior Executive Service (SES), Vice Director of Intelligence (VJ2), USCENTCOM; and Mr. William E. “Buddy” Rizzio, Defense Intelligence Senior Leader (DISL), Joint Intelligence Center, USCENTCOM (JICCENT), falsified, distorted, suppressed, or delayed intelligence products. The allegations, in essence, were that the intelligence was altered or suppressed to present a more optimistic portrayal of the success of USCENTCOM’s efforts to degrade and destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (the counter-ISIL campaign).

To investigate these allegations, we assembled a multi-disciplinary team of DoD OIG employees, including administrative investigators, intelligence analysts, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) digital forensics specialists, auditors, attorneys, and statisticians.

Much of the information involved in this investigation was classified at the SECRET level. However, we also considered information at other classification levels. We prepared a report with the full results of our investigation, classified at the SECRET level. That report is more than 500 pages long, and provides a comprehensive description of the witness testimony, documentary evidence, and analysis that led to our conclusions. We have provided that classified report to the relevant organizations in the DoD, including USCENTCOM, the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). We have also provided the classified report to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) as well as congressional committees with jurisdiction over the DoD or the Intelligence Community, including the Senate Armed Services Committee; the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense; the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee; the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; the House Armed Services Committee;

the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense; the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee; and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.¹

In addition, we have prepared this separate, unclassified report of investigation, based on the classified report. We attempted to include as much unclassified information in this unclassified report as we could to provide a comprehensive report on our investigation and conclusions.

Our classified report and this report are divided into nine parts. Part I is an introduction to this report.

Part II provides an overview of the scope of our investigation, including a description of the initial allegations and the additional allegations raised by witnesses we interviewed; a summary of the response to those allegations by witnesses and the subjects of the investigation, our investigative process, the document and email searches we conducted in support of the investigation; and our review of USCENTCOM intelligence products.

Parts III and IV provide an overview of Intelligence Community standards and processes, as well as USCENTCOM's mission and intelligence analysis process as they relate to this investigation.

Part V provides a chronology of the significant events related to this investigation.

Part VI provides our analysis of the allegations we investigated. It is divided into several parts. First, we provide testimony and evidence regarding the allegation that intelligence was falsified, as well as our conclusions on that allegation. The next section concerns the allegations that intelligence products were distorted. In the classified version of this report, we provide lengthy descriptions of the testimony and evidence regarding the allegations that intelligence was distorted. We detail witnesses' testimony regarding this allegation, both for and against, and we provide in detail our review of individual examples of alleged distortion that the complainants and witnesses provided. We also included testimony from intelligence officials outside of USCENTCOM regarding their view of USCENTCOM's intelligence products related to the counter-ISIL campaign. Because that testimony is mostly classified, we do not provide much of it in this unclassified version of the report.

In Part VI, we also discuss our analysis of a random sample of intelligence products that we closely reviewed to determine whether the edits showed a trend of more positive or more

¹ We also provided a preliminary copy of this report to the subjects for their comments. We have considered their responses and made a few factual revisions or incorporated some additional explanatory information in this final report, as appropriate, in response to their comments. However, our overall conclusions were not changed as a result of their comments.

negative changes regarding ISIL or Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) assessments. We then provide our overall conclusions on the allegation of distortion, and the basis for those conclusions.

After that, we discuss the allegations of suppression and delay, along with our conclusions on each of these allegations.

In the next section, we discuss the other allegations that arose during the course of our investigation, such as whether USCENTCOM emails were deleted; whether USCENTCOM Directorate of Intelligence (CCJ2) employees or managers were urged to leave; whether the Director of National Intelligence, James R. Clapper, attempted to influence USCENTCOM intelligence products; or whether anyone in the CCJ2 attempted to intimidate witnesses in this investigation.

We also discuss allegations and evidence regarding the command climate within the CCJ2 and JICCENT.

Part VII discusses the evidence and testimony regarding the management processes related to the CCJ2 intelligence production and our findings and recommendations regarding improvements to those processes.

Part VIII provides a consolidated listing of all recommendations.

Part IX presents our overall conclusions concerning this investigation.

II. OVERVIEW OF ALLEGATIONS AND DOD OIG INVESTIGATION

A. Allegations

In our report, we examine allegations raised by two complainants, whom we call Complainant 1 and Complainant 2. The allegations pertained to CCJ2 intelligence products related to the counter-ISIL campaign, and whether those intelligence products were falsified, distorted, delayed, or suppressed to make the counter-ISIL campaign appear more successful than the intelligence warranted. In addition to the original allegations raised by the complainants, we also considered other allegations and issues raised by the complainants and witnesses in their interviews, as well as some other issues raised in media reports. In general, the allegations addressed in this report relate to intelligence products and processes from May 2014, when Mr. Ryckman arrived at USCENTCOM (MG Grove arrived shortly thereafter, in June 2014), and the initiation of our investigation in September 2015. We received no allegations concerning other aspects of USCENTCOM intelligence operations.

The allegations were first raised by Complainant 1 in a letter dated May 28, 2015, to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Inspector General (IG). Complainant 1, who worked in the CCJ2, alleged that:

[t]hrough systematic, recurring, and deliberate actions, [senior USCENTCOM intelligence leaders] violated key IC [Intelligence Community] regulations (to include [Intelligence Community Directive (ICD)] 203, ICD 206, and ICD 208); engaged in wanton violation of professional ethical standards; and exhibited gross incompetence in management and leadership.

He asserted the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders imposed a “false narrative” on analysts and analytic leaders that Iraqi forces, with U.S. help, were performing well on the battlefield, while ISIL was struggling.² He wrote that the leaders imposed this narrative through many changes, small and large, on a daily basis, the cumulative effect of which was creation of a false narrative. He added that the JICCENT, which is part of the CCJ2, was eventually reorganized to create a layer of managers willing to enforce the false narrative, “relieving senior leaders of the entire workload of falsifying intelligence, and more broadly socializing the unethical behavior.”

² Normally, the term “CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders” in this report refers to MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and Mr. Rizzio.

Specifically, Complainant 1 asserted that:

- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders used Intelligence Community analytic tradecraft as a tool to question and change analytic assessments “with a bias towards a pre-cooked outcome,” and “sought to use IC analytic coordination as a means to interrupt and inhibit the mission of other IC agencies.”
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders “restructured and deliberately broke the product lines in an effort to give [the leadership] better editorial control over the intelligence effort.”
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders “arbitrarily adjusted estimates of ISIL strength.”
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders changed an intelligence report on an ISIL attack at Al Asad air base in Iraq because the report “was considered too critical of [the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)].”
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders suspended “all routine coordination of intelligence products by analysts beginning in early October 2014” in an effort to export the false narrative.
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders refused to raise the Iraq Internal Stability Indications and Warning level (WATCHCON) to its highest level until after the fall of Mosul in June 2014.
- The CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders used the coordination process to inhibit “intelligence production and mission accomplishment among other IC producers.” Specifically, Complainant 1 cited three President’s Daily Brief (PDB) articles and one DIA Defense Intelligence Digest (DID) article.

In his complaint, Complainant 1 also included a list of individuals who he stated were familiar with these various issues.

Complainant 2 alleged that the top two CCJ2 senior intelligence officials – MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman – “routinely and knowingly violated Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 203: Analytic Standards since July 2014.” This complainant asserted that these officials routinely and intentionally re-wrote and suppressed intelligence products to conform with a “preconceived narrative,” intentionally withheld information from the DIA, and engaged in “foot-dragging and delay tactics during coordination of DIA HQ’s [Headquarters] intelligence products” in an effort to “undermine DIA’s intelligence production.” He asserted that the CCJ2 leaders’ actions created a culture within the CCJ2 directorate that expects its junior and senior analysts to violate ICD 203 as a matter of standard practice. Complainant 2 wrote he was heavily involved in intelligence production in support of the Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) and that he had directly and indirectly observed the effects of these expectations on intelligence production since the start of the OIR in mid-2014.

We interviewed the two complainants several times to clarify their allegations, to request documents in support of the allegations, and to ask them for the names of others who they believed had direct knowledge of the facts relating to their allegations.

As a result of those interviews and reviews of what was provided, in September 2015 we initiated a full-scale investigation of these allegations. We interviewed 28 of the 29 individuals the complainants named, some of whom agreed with their allegations, in whole or in part, and others who did not.³ We also asked these witnesses to identify others they thought we should interview. We interviewed most of them as well.

In total, we interviewed 120 witnesses, both inside and outside USCENTCOM. We interviewed some of the witnesses several times. We conducted a total of 152 interviews. All of our interviews were conducted under oath and transcribed.

In addition, we obtained a written response to an email query regarding whether one individual could confirm a statement allegedly made in his presence. Other than the alleged statement, this person had no knowledge of the matters under investigation and was not a candidate for an in-person interview. Early in the investigation, we also obtained a sworn statement from an Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) employee in lieu of an in-person interview. At the time we accepted the sworn statement, it appeared to be the most effective method to obtain his information, which was complete and required no follow up.

Several of these witnesses raised additional allegations similar to or amplifying the complainants’ allegations. We therefore included the most significant of these allegations in the scope of our investigation. Those additional allegations included assertions that the CCJ2 senior

³ One former analyst who left Federal service initially agreed to be interviewed by us, but ultimately failed to respond to repeated attempts to schedule an interview.

leaders required a higher burden of proof, or additional sourcing, for information favorable to ISIL or negative to the ISF; restricted the use of certain words in intelligence products; suppressed intelligence information regarding the battle for Ramadi, Iraq, in April 2015; included inaccurate information in a J2 Weekly Update; and suppressed a report of a massacre by ISIL forces in Hit, Iraq.

We also examined other issues raised by witnesses and media reports that related to this investigation, such as whether the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders deleted emails and product files from USCENTCOM's information technology system, whether MG Grove had "highly unusual" contacts with the Director of National Intelligence, and whether subordinate leaders in the CCJ2 attempted to intimidate witnesses in this investigation.

As our classified report discusses in detail, our witness interviews found many individuals who agreed with the complainants' allegations or certain parts of their allegations, or some of the other allegations. Many other witnesses disagreed with those allegations, some strenuously, and other witnesses had no opinion or knowledge of the issues raised by these allegations.

For example, while only a few witnesses alleged that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders knowingly falsified facts or intentionally provided inaccurate intelligence assessments, various witnesses alleged that based on the senior intelligence leaders' regular edits, the processes that were used, and different standards that were employed, intelligence was distorted to present a more positive picture of the success of the operations against ISIL. Specifically, some witnesses alleged that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders – MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, Mr. Rizzio – took steps to ensure assessments that portrayed ISIL's success or the ISF's failure were changed or delayed to present a rosier picture of the result of USCENTCOM efforts. Some analysts asserted that a higher burden of proof was imposed when "bad news" was presented by the analysts than when "good news" was reported. Others alleged the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders required excessive amounts of proof or multiple sources of information for products that indicated ISIL was succeeding or the ISF was failing in order to delay publication of products. Witnesses reported some alleged examples of this, such as editing out certain words to make the assessments of ISF actions more positive.

On the other hand, many other witnesses disagreed with the allegations and believed that the editing of intelligence products by the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders was within the scope of their authority and resulted in more accurate and better intelligence products for USCENTCOM leadership. These witnesses asserted that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders edited products or questioned analysts during product reviews in an attempt to produce better, more succinct, executive-level products. For example, some witnesses described certain CCJ2 analysts as not being proficient in writing at an executive level, and also being too wedded to their writing. These witnesses also stated that analysts sometimes produced incomplete products because they did not have access to all of the intelligence information available to the CCJ2 leadership. These witnesses described some analysts as being unwilling to accept ongoing, crisis-driven change within the CCJ2.

Other witnesses described a CCJ2 organization struggling to adjust its intelligence analysis to deal with the evolving crisis and increased tempo of USCENTCOM's counter-ISIL campaign, which began in August 2014. These witnesses noted that the CCJ2 implemented changes as it shifted from non-crisis operations to crisis operations, such as the activation of the Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC), the disruption of team organizations to staff the IFC, the move to 24/7 operations, shift work, new work schedules (for example, 3 days on, 3 days off), and 12-hour shifts that routinely extended to 14 hours or more. All of these changes occurred under the supervision of newly arrived CCJ2 senior leaders, and witnesses also noted these changes imposed a strain on individuals, teams, and the entire CCJ2 organization.

We also interviewed the subjects of these allegations – MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and Mr. Rizzio. As we discuss in more detail in the following sections, the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders adamantly denied that they falsified, distorted, delayed, or suppressed intelligence.

Specifically, MG Grove denied each allegation and explained his rationale for the management changes he imposed.

Mr. Ryckman also denied the allegations. He stated that the changes he made to analysts' products were based on analytic tradecraft and were intended to improve the products. He denied that he ever attempted to falsify, distort, delay, or suppress any intelligence product. He stated, for example, "I'm going to hold people to a standard that I hold myself to, and that's on tradecraft issues."

Mr. Rizzio also denied the allegations. He stated "we did the best we could given the information that we had available, given the requirement from the management ... to be objective and balanced. And that's what we attempted to do to the best of our ability."

We also interviewed General (GEN) Lloyd J. Austin III, U.S. Army, Commander, USCENTCOM. Several witnesses asserted that GEN Austin did not like to receive bad news

from his staff regarding USCENTCOM's counter-ISIL campaign. These witnesses believed that GEN Austin was the source of pressure to present a rosier picture of the effects of USCENTCOM's operations against ISIL.

GEN Austin denied the allegations, stating that he had no knowledge "of anybody trying to downplay or rosy up intelligence." He added it was important that he have accurate information because "You're not going to win if you don't have the right information. So rosyng up that doesn't help us be successful in this fight."

GEN Austin also stressed the importance of having multiple inputs from various sources and stated, "We want the information to be accurate whether it's good, or bad, or whatever. And so I would assume and expect that the standard is the standard across the board."

To investigate these disparate assertions, we took several steps, including:

- interviewing the witnesses regarding the allegations,
- seeking documents and examples from the witnesses to support or refute the allegations,
- conducting detailed reviews of the specific examples that the witnesses raised,
- obtaining on our own the full universe of USCENTCOM intelligence products relating to the investigation and produced during the period covered by our investigation,
- interviewing witnesses outside of USCENTCOM regarding the CCJ2's intelligence products,
- conducting an analytical review of a statistical sample of intelligence products to determine whether the edits made presented a rosier picture of USCENTCOM's operations,
- reviewing surveys conducted of the CCJ2 analysts, and
- assessing the CCJ2 management processes related to the production and editing of intelligence products and whether there were deficiencies in the processes or areas that could be improved.

Part II.B of this report describes in more detail the investigation process we used to investigate and assess the wide disparity in testimony on these serious allegations.

B. The DoD OIG Investigation

We formed a multi-disciplinary team of more than 30 DoD OIG employees, including administrative investigators, intelligence analysts, DCIS digital forensics specialists, auditors, attorneys, and statisticians, to interview witnesses and assess the documentary evidence. As previously noted, the team conducted 152 in-person interviews with 120 witnesses. We interviewed analysts assigned to USCENTCOM. When witnesses discussed documents, we asked for copies. Witnesses provided some, and we discuss relevant documents provided by witnesses throughout the report.

We also obtained, reviewed, and analyzed millions of CCJ2 emails and intelligence documents relevant to these allegations.

We developed a three-step approach to gather and evaluate evidence relevant to the allegations: (1) we retrieved data in the form of emails and intelligence products; (2) we searched the emails and intelligence products for relevant evidence using key words and phrases; and (3) we reviewed the results of the searches to incorporate evidence into our investigation and the report, as appropriate.

In gathering these documents, we first interviewed and consulted with subject matter experts and systems administrators at USCENTCOM and the DIA to identify the relevant computer drives and to provide appropriate oversight of the collection process. Under the direction of DCIS digital forensics specialists, computer systems administrators at USCENTCOM and the DIA assisted our computer forensic data collection. In scoping our data search for documents, files, and emails, we identified secret and top secret shared drives, SharePoint files, and similar data that were contained on the Secure Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNET) or the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communication System (JWICS) computer systems used by the USCENTCOM analysts in the intelligence production process. DCIS digital forensics specialists and OIG administrative investigators retrieved the collected data from the DIA and USCENTCOM systems.

Our collection efforts retrieved 15.35 terabytes of unclassified, secret, and top secret data. Emails comprised 660 gigabytes of the unclassified, secret, and top secret data. From the data we retrieved, we identified and searched over 17 million documents and files, approximately 2 million of which were emails.

We used search terms and phrases to search the data and emails for evidence relevant to the allegations, and our software programs identified more than 425,000 documents and files for initial review. We reviewed all 425,000 documents and files and identified thousands of emails and documents for closer review and evaluation. After reviewing the emails and documents and conducting witness interviews, we conducted additional searches of the data and emails to find evidence relevant to the various specific allegations. Those additional searches also identified various draft intelligence products and emails created during the processing of those intelligence products. We incorporate relevant documents, emails, and evidence specific to each allegation throughout this report.

In addition, we reviewed a statistical, random sample of USCENTCOM intelligence products in order to perform an independent analysis of the editing of these products. We examined this sample, which consisted of 140 final products, to assess whether editing performed on the analysts' products systematically presented a rosier picture – that the ISF was succeeding and ISIL was failing. We first identified 1,301 instances in which those products were issued during the period of May 1, 2014, through September 30, 2015. Then we designed a statistically based sample from the 1,301 products using a 90-percent confidence level to identify 140 products for review.⁴ We searched for and found a total of 3,443 separate versions of those 140 products. We analyzed the edits made on these products to assess whether the edits made were more positive or negative in their assessment of whether the ISF was succeeding and ISIL failing. We present our findings regarding this systematic review in Part VI.

Finally, in Part VII of our report, we discuss the management processes relating to CCJ2 intelligence production. We found deficiencies in those processes that we believe contributed to the allegations, including significant communication and feedback problems; changes in organization and priorities; and inconsistency and ambiguity in the production and analytical review process and in assessment of friendly forces.

⁴ Confidence is the probability that over a large number of samples drawn from a given population, 90 percent will include the true population value within their precision (which is often called the margin of error). The technical label for that range is the confidence interval.

III. BACKGROUND

This section provides a brief background on USCENTCOM's mission and organization, and the joint intelligence process.

A. USCENTCOM Mission and Organization

USCENTCOM, established on January 1, 1983, is one of the DoD's six geographic combatant commands designated in section 161, title 10, United States Code,⁵ (10 U.S.C. § 161). The USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) consists of 20 countries,⁶ spanning the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, as depicted by the following graphic.

Figure III.A.1. USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility



According to USCENTCOM, its mission is to direct and enable military operations and activities with allies and partners to increase regional security and stability in support of enduring

⁵ The other geographical combatant commands are U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Southern Command.

⁶ Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

U.S. interests.⁷ As of March 8, 2016, the top two USCENTCOM priorities were: (1) Dismantle and eventually defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in order to prevent further trans-regional spread of sectarian-fueled radical extremism, and to mitigate the continuing Iraq-Syria crisis; and (2) Continue support to Afghanistan, in partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to assist Afghanistan as it establishes itself as a regionally integrated, secure, stable, and developing country.⁸

Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) is the U.S. strategy, initiated in June 2014, with 65 coalition partners, to dismantle and defeat ISIL. This strategy includes counter-terrorism operations; training and equipping Iraqi Security Forces and moderate Syrian opposition forces; and conducting diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian relief activities in Iraq and Syria. The allegations we investigated concern USCENTCOM intelligence activities related to OIR.

- In addition to the two priorities listed above, GEN Austin, Commander, USCENTCOM, during the time period covered by this review, identified additional priorities reflecting the breadth and complexity of the challenges facing the command, including defeating Al Qaeda, denying violent extremists safe havens and freedom of movement, and limiting the reach of terrorists to enhance protection of the U.S. homeland and allies and partner nation homelands;
- supporting a whole-of-government approach to developments in Yemen; preventing Yemen from growing as an ungoverned space for Al Qaeda and violent extremist organizations, and supporting regional stability efforts that retain U.S. counter-terrorism capacity in the region;
- maintaining a credible deterrent posture against Iran's evolving conventional and strategic military capabilities;
- preventing and, if required, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and disrupt their development and prevent their use;
- protecting lines of communication and ensuring free use of the shared spaces (including the cyber commons) and secure unimpeded global access for legal commerce;
- shaping, supporting, incentivizing, and maintaining ready, flexible regional coalitions and partners, as well as cross-combatant command and interagency

⁷ USCENTCOM Command Narrative, available at www.centcom.mil.

⁸ Statement of General Lloyd J. Austin III on the posture of U.S. Central Command, March 8, 2016, available at www.centcom.mil.

U.S. whole-of-government teams, to support crisis response and optimize military resources; and,

- developing and executing security cooperation programs, improving bilateral and multi-lateral partnerships, building partnered capacities, and improving information sharing, security and stability.⁹

By law, the USCENTCOM Commander is responsible for the performance of missions assigned to the combatant command by the President or by the Secretary of Defense with the approval of the President.¹⁰ The chain of command for the USCENTCOM Commander begins with the President, then to the Secretary of Defense, and finally to the commander.¹¹ GEN Austin commanded USCENTCOM from March 22, 2013, to March 30, 2016, and retired in May 2016. Prior to GEN Austin, the USCENTCOM Commander was General (Gen) James N. Mattis, U.S. Marine Corps, who served from August 11, 2010, to March 22, 2013. After GEN Austin, GEN Joseph L. Votel, U.S. Army, assumed command of USCENTCOM on March 30, 2016.

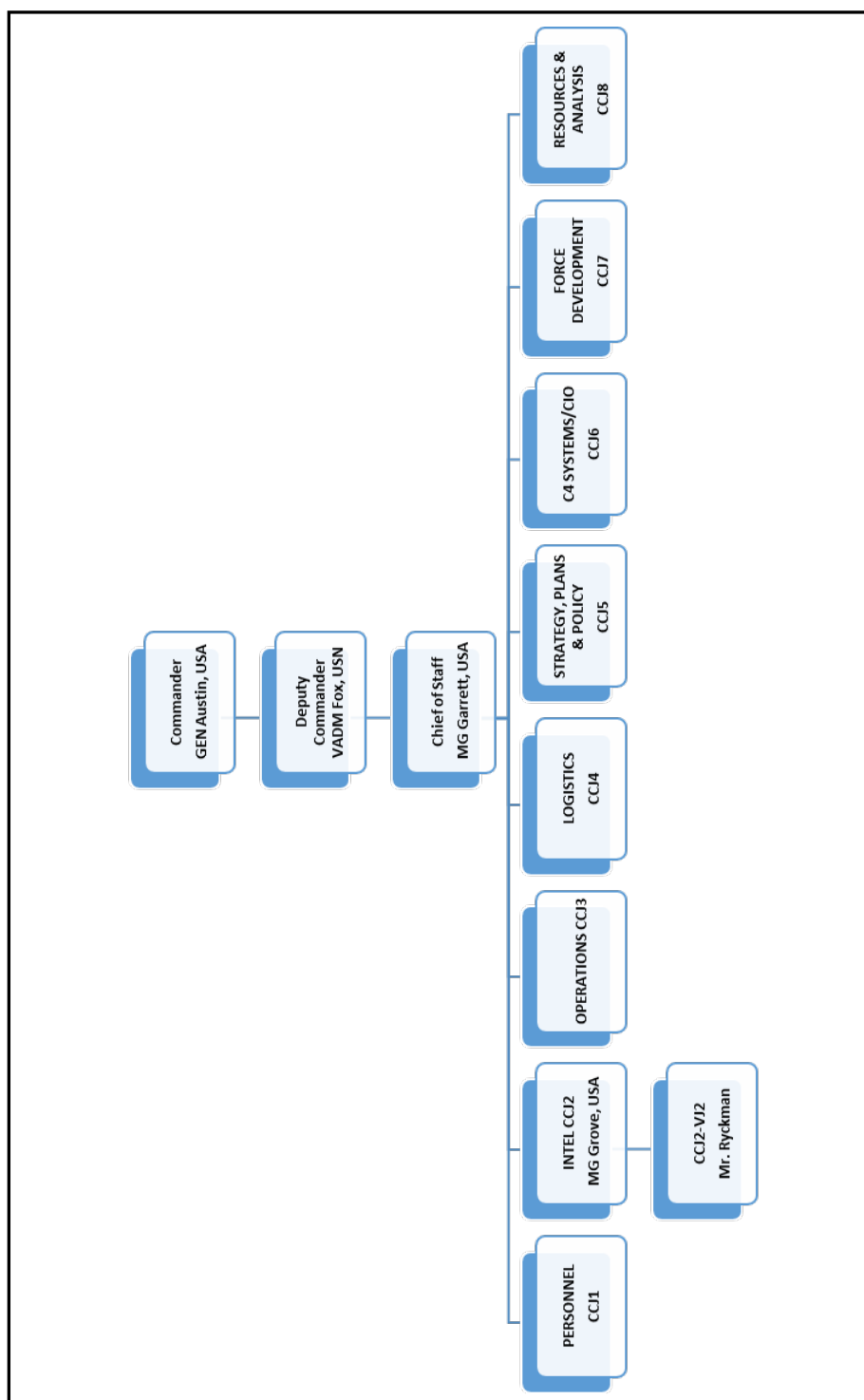
USCENTCOM's main headquarters element is located at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. The following graphic provides a snapshot of the headquarters staff directorates: (1) Manpower and Personnel (CCJ1); (2) Intelligence (CCJ2); (3) Operations (CCJ3); (4) Logistics (CCJ4); (5) Strategy, Plans and Policy (CCJ5); (6) Command, Control, Communication, and Computer (C4) Systems (CCJ6); (7) Force Development (CCJ7); and (8) Structure, Resources, and Assessment (CCJ8). Our investigation focused on actions and activities within the CCJ2 directorate. Further details concerning the organization of the CCJ2 directorate are discussed in Part IV.B. of this report.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ 10 U.S.C. § 164. Further duties and responsibilities of combatant commanders are contained in Enclosure 5 of DoD Directive (DoDD) 5100.01, "Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components," December 21, 2010.

¹¹ 10 U.S.C. § 162.

Figure III.A.2. USCENTCOM Command Structure (as of August 2015)



B. The Joint Intelligence Process

General Concepts

The allegations forming the basis for this investigation relate to the joint intelligence analysis and production activities at USCENTCOM.¹² According to Joint Publication (JP) 2-0, the primary role of joint intelligence, the term applied to intelligence produced by elements of more than one military service of the same nation, is to provide information and assessments to help accomplish the mission.¹³ The responsibilities of joint intelligence include informing the joint force commander about adversaries and aspects of the operational environment to help the commander make decisions to achieve command objectives; describing the operational environment;¹⁴ identifying, defining and nominating objectives for the commander's consideration; supporting planning and execution of objectives; countering adversary deception and surprise; supporting friendly deception efforts; and assessing the effectiveness of operations.¹⁵

Also according to JP 2-0, the most important role of intelligence in military operations is to provide commanders and their staff with analysis of key aspects of the operational environment to assist them in their decision-making process. This includes determining adversary capabilities and intentions, identifying adversary critical centers of gravities (COGs)

¹² Analysis and production is defined as “the conversion of processed information into intelligence through the integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of all source data and the preparation of intelligence products in support of known or anticipated user requirements.” Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, “Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” dated November 8, 2010 (as amended through February 15, 2016), p 13.

¹³ JP 2-0, “Joint Intelligence,” October 22, 2013, I-3. This publication is the keystone document for joint intelligence, and provides fundamental principles and guidance for intelligence support to joint operations. JPs are prepared under the direction of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and are designed to set forth joint doctrine to govern the activities and performance of U.S. Armed Forces in joint operations, including combatant commands such as USCENTCOM. The joint doctrines established in these publications applies to the joint staff, combatant commands, subunified commands, joint task forces, subordinate components of these commands, the Services, and combat support agencies.

¹⁴ The operational environment refers to the conditions, circumstances, and influences that the joint force commander must consider affecting the command mission. For example, terrain, weather, politics, military, economics, social factors, information and social media, and infrastructure.

¹⁵ JP 2-0, I-3.

and vulnerabilities, and estimating adversary courses of actions (COAs).¹⁶ Determining adversary intent is a primary challenge that confronts intelligence.¹⁷

Intelligence, as the synthesis of quantitative analysis and qualitative judgment is subject to competing interpretation. It is therefore important that intelligence analysts communicate the degree of confidence they have in their analytic conclusions. Such communication of analytic confidence helps intelligence consumers in deciding how much weight to place on intelligence assessments when making a decision.¹⁸

According to JP 2-0, intelligence is not an exact science. Intelligence analysts will have some uncertainty as they assess the operational environment, as will the commander and staff as they plan and execute operations.¹⁹

The intelligence process involves: planning and direction; collection; processing and exploitation; analysis and production; dissemination and integration; and, evaluation and feedback.²⁰ During this process information is collected, processed, and fused into an all-source intelligence product²¹ designed to answer a decision-maker's needs and requirements.

According to JP 2-0, intelligence supports each of the three levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical) with corresponding levels of intelligence operations.

- National strategic intelligence:
 - produced for the President;
 - informs policy makers, the National Security Council (NSC) Congress, the Secretary of Defense, senior military leaders, combatant commanders, and other U.S. Government departments and agencies; and

¹⁶ Center of Gravity is defined as “[t]he source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.” JP 1-02, p 29. Course of action is defined as “1. Any sequence of activities that an individual or unit may follow. 2. A scheme developed to accomplish a mission. 3. A product of the course-of-action development step of the joint operation planning process.” JP 1-02, p 55.

¹⁷ JP 2-0, I-28.

¹⁸ JP 2-0, I-2.

¹⁹ JP 2-0, I-2.

²⁰ JP 2-0, I-5.

²¹ All-source intelligence is defined as “1. Intelligence products and/or organizations and activities that incorporate all sources of information in the production of finished intelligence. 2. In intelligence collection, a phrase that indicates that in the satisfaction of intelligence requirements, all collection, processing, exploitation, and reporting systems and resources are identified for possible use and those most capable are tasked.” JP 1-02, p 11.

- used to develop national strategy and policy, monitor the international and global situation, prepare military plans, determine major weapons systems and force structure requirements, and conduct strategic operations.
- Operational intelligence:
 - used primarily by combatant commanders and subordinate joint forces and components;
 - focuses on answering the commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIRs), assessing the effectiveness of operations, maintaining situational awareness of adversary military disposition, capabilities, and intentions, and other relevant aspects of the operational environment.
- Tactical intelligence:
 - used by commanders, planners, and operators for planning and conducting battles, engagements, and special missions.²²

Intelligence Organizations: National Intelligence Structure

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is the principal advisor to the President, the NSC, and the Homeland Security Council for intelligence matters related to national security. In that capacity, the DNI is responsible for ensuring that national intelligence is provided to the President, the other national policy makers listed above, and other persons as deemed appropriate.²³ Among other duties and responsibilities, the DNI develops and determines the annual budget for the National Intelligence Program (NIP), serves as the head of the Intelligence Community, and implements policies and procedures to ensure all-source intelligence includes competitive analysis and that alternative views are brought to the attention of policy makers. The DNI also provides guidance and direction to the Intelligence Community through the issuance of Intelligence Community Directives (ICDs).

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense regarding intelligence, counterintelligence, security, sensitive activities, and other intelligence-related matters.²⁴ On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, the USD(I) coordinates with the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), to ensure that defense intelligence, counterintelligence, and security components within the operating forces (Services and combatant commands) are resourced to support DoD missions and are responsive

²² JP 2-0, I-23.

²³ National intelligence refers to all intelligence, regardless of the source from which derived and including information gathered within or outside the United States, that pertains to more than one U.S. Government agency that involves threats to the United States, its people, property, or interests; the development, proliferation, or use of weapons of mass destruction; or any other matter bearing on U.S. national or homeland security. 50 U.S.C. § 3003.

²⁴ DoDD 5143.01, "Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I))," October 24, 2014.

to DNI requirements. For operational support, the USD(I) develops and oversees implementation of policy, programs, plans, and guidance for defense intelligence warfighting support to the combatant commands.²⁵ The USD(I) also provides oversight and guidance for the annual budget for the Military Intelligence Program (MIP)²⁶ and monitors the implementation and execution of the MIP by the Services and the heads of the intelligence Combat Support Agencies (CSAs).²⁷

The Director, DIA, reports to the USD(I), and advises the Secretary of Defense, CJCS, and the combatant commanders on all matters concerning all-source Defense Intelligence.²⁸ The DIA provides components all-source intelligence products that conform to standards on analytic integrity and sourcing to meet customer needs in a timely manner.²⁹ The Director also manages, organizes, trains, and develops the expertise of the DIA Analytic and Defense Intelligence workforce. This includes those DIA employees assigned to combatant commands. The DIA Director also assigns DIA all-source intelligence analytical responsibilities to each combatant command intelligence center based on capabilities, workforce characteristics, and mission requirements.

The CJCS provides direction to the Joint Staff Director for Intelligence, J2, to ensure that adequate, reliable intelligence and counterintelligence support is available in a timely manner to the JCS and the combatant commands. The Joint Staff Directorate for Intelligence, J2, is the principal intelligence advisor to the CJCS and provides crisis intelligence to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), CJCS, and the Joint Staff. The J2 also advocates for combatant command intelligence requirements to the Joint Staff, the intelligence Combat Support Agencies, the OSD, and the ODNI.

Intelligence Organizations: The Intelligence Community

According to 50 U.S.C. § 3003, the Intelligence Community consists of 17 member organizations, headed by the DNI. The DoD members are the DIA; the National Security Agency (NSA); the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA); the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO); and the intelligence elements or components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps (“Military Intelligence”). The non-DoD members are the ODNI;

²⁵ Id at 5.

²⁶ DoDD 5205.12, “Military Intelligence Program (MIP),” November 14, 2008, contains further information regarding the MIP.

²⁷ The Combat Support Agencies for intelligence are the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. DoDD 3000.06, “Combat Support Agencies,” June 27, 2013.

²⁸ DoDD 5105.21, “Defense Intelligence Agency,” March 18, 2008.

²⁹ Id at 2.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); the Department of State; the Department of Energy; Department of the Treasury; the Department of Homeland Security; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Coast Guard Intelligence; and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The DoD members in the Intelligence Community, as listed above, report to the Secretary of Defense, the USD(I), and the Secretaries of the Military Departments. Combatant commands and their associated intelligence components are not listed in section 3003 and, therefore, are not members of the Intelligence Community.

Both DoD and non-DoD Intelligence Community members routinely provide support to combatant commands and joint force commanders while continuing to support national decision makers.³⁰ In addition, as discussed below, many of the intelligence products produced by the intelligence elements in the combatant commands are reviewed and considered by members of the Intelligence Community and others, such as the President. While these recipients may not be the primary customer of the intelligence produced by the CCJ2, they review, consider, and often rely on those products.

³⁰ Duties and responsibilities of Intelligence Community members are established by Executive Order 13470, "Further Amendments to Executive Order 12333, United States Intelligence Activities," Section 1.7, July 30, 2008.

IV. USCENTCOM INTELLIGENCE

A. USCENTCOM Intelligence Directorate (CCJ2) Mission and Organization

The USCENTCOM Intelligence Directorate (CCJ2) is one of eight staff directorates in USCENTCOM. It is the primary staff element combining national, DoD, and Military Service intelligence into a single unified effort to support the USCENTCOM Commander's objectives. According to JP 2-01, to accomplish this mission, the CCJ2 assists the USCENTCOM Commander and staff in developing strategy; planning major operations and campaigns; coordinating the intelligence structure and architecture; recommending appropriate command relationships for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets; and supervising the production and dissemination of appropriate intelligence products.³¹

The CCJ2 provides intelligence support for USCENTCOM operations throughout its entire area of responsibility, including the counter-ISIL campaign in Iraq and Syria. Although the USCENTCOM Commander is the primary customer of CCJ2 intelligence products, the products are also shared within the DoD and the Intelligence Community through JWICS, and reviewed and considered by decision makers in these entities.

The current USCENTCOM Organization and Functions Regulation, dated September 28, 2015, (as well as the previous edition, dated June 5, 2014) states that the CCJ2 provides the USCENTCOM Commander with threat warning, targeting intelligence, and assessments by conducting all-source collection, analysis, fusion, targeting, production, and dissemination; special security communications and foreign disclosure operations; and counterintelligence operations.³²

According to Central Command Regulation 10-2, specific CCJ2 functions³³ include:

- operating the JICCEN;³⁴
- providing intelligence to USCENTCOM component commands;
- collecting, analyzing, producing, and disseminating intelligence products relating to the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR);

³¹ JP 2-01, "Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations," January 5, 2012, II-1.

³² Central Command Regulation 10-2 (CCR 10-2), "HQ USCENTCOM ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS," September 28, 2015.

³³ Id.

³⁴ JICCEN is a term unique to USCENTCOM, and otherwise refers to a Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) which is an interdependent, operational intelligence organization at the DoD, combatant command, or joint task force level. [JP 2-0, GL-9]

- supporting preplanned and rapid deployment crisis options;
- producing intelligence for theater targeting; developing intelligence estimates, plans, programs, and policies for USCENTCOM and component activities;
- supporting bilateral and multilateral foreign intelligence relationships and coalition and allied partners;
- leveraging U.S. and allied intelligence, and subordinate component capabilities to unify intelligence efforts;
- providing a Common Intelligence Picture among USCENTCOM components and coalition partners;
- providing an integrated strategic, theater, and tactical capability for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance;
- supervising the USCENTCOM Special Security Office; and
- managing intelligence personnel, financial resources, and human resources; and,
- providing resources to and participating in the Coalition Intelligence Center.³⁵

The CCJ2 is headed by the J2, a two-star flag or general officer, who is responsible for supervising the CCJ2 staff in the accomplishment of all assigned tasks and responsibilities. The J2 reports directly to the USCENTCOM Commander. The J2 at the time of these allegations was MG Grove, who held the position from June 2014 until July 2016.

Supporting the J2 is a civilian vice director (CCJ2-VJ2) who supports the J2 and is the head of the CCJ2 in the absence of the J2. Mr. Ryckman, a member of the senior executive service, is the current CCJ2 vice director. He took over that position in May 2014.

Additional CCJ2 senior leadership positions include a one-star flag and general officer Deputy Director of Intelligence for Operations (CCJ2-DJ2O) who is responsible for coordinating CCJ2 operations, plans, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and targets, and a Defense Intelligence Senior Level (DISL) who holds two positions – the DIA Senior Representative (DSR) to USCENTCOM and the USCENTCOM Deputy Director of Intelligence for Support (CCJ2-DJ2S) – and reports to the DIA Director and MG Grove.³⁶

³⁵ The Coalition Intelligence Center was established by USCENTCOM to leverage the access, intelligence experiences, and perspectives of 68 Operation Enduring Freedom coalition partners into daily operations on a more comprehensive basis. This collaborative environment with mission partners facilitates information sharing within a multinational force. See May 23, 2002, Statement of Brigadier General John F. Kimmons, U.S. Army, USCENTCOM Director of Intelligence, testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. The Coalition Intelligence Center falls under the Regional Division, one of the CCJ2's five functional divisions.

³⁶ MG Grove became the J2 in June 2014; Mr. Ryckman became the Vice J2 in May 2014; the CCJ2-DJ2O became the Deputy Director of Intelligence for Operations in April 2015; and the DISL became the DIA Senior Representative in January 2015.

As discussed further in Part IV.B of this report, the CCJ2 includes the JICCEN, five functional divisions, and three support offices.

The functional divisions are:

- 1) Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) – coordinates with the USCENTCOM Operations Directorate to manage and synchronize ISR assets;
- 2) Operations – the CCJ2 focal point for internal and external coordination for intelligence issues;
- 3) Plans – prepares the intelligence-related portions of USCENTCOM operational, planning and execution orders and documents, and functions related to Priority Intelligence Requirement (PIRs) and Information Requirements (IRs);
- 4) Resources and Requirements – performs a variety of functions related to manpower, financial resources, training, facilities, policy development, and logistics; and,
- 5) Counterintelligence (CI) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Operations – coordinates, deconflicts and oversees CI and HUMINT during all phases of USCENTCOM operations.

The support offices are:

- 1) Special Security Office – manages the USCENTCOM security program;
- 2) Foreign Disclosure Office – provides foreign disclosure expertise to USCENTCOM staff, component commands, combined joint task forces and regional embassies; and
- 3) Mission Support Office – provides administrative and logistics support.³⁷

³⁷ According to USCENTCOM, as of December 2016, the MSO reports to the Regional Division (JAR) of JICCEN.

B. Joint Intelligence Center (JICCENT) Mission and Organization

USCENTCOM's intelligence analysis and production is performed by the CCJ2 JICCENT. According to JP 2-0, the primary function of the JICCENT is to integrate the intelligence capabilities of the ODNI, Military Services, the Combat Support Agencies, and USCENTCOM to coordinate intelligence planning, collection management, analysis and support.³⁸ The goal of this effort is to seamlessly combine intelligence functions and operations into a single organization that supports the information requirements of the USCENTCOM Commander.³⁹ The JICCENT's analysis and production responsibilities focus on 20 countries in the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia, as well as the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Persian Gulf, portions of the Indian Ocean, and other locations within USCENTCOM's area of operations. Specific JICCENT functions include theater warning and intelligence; imagery, geospatial support, and analysis; assessments; and support to USCENTCOM planning, operations, and targeting.⁴⁰

The JICCENT is commanded by an O-6 military officer. The analyst workforce is a combination of civilian, military, and contractor personnel. As of May 2014, the JICCENT had 888 authorized personnel, with 648 of these authorized positions supporting analysis and production. Most, but not all of the Government civilian employees are DIA-funded analysts, provided by the DIA, and falling under a single DIA personnel system.⁴¹

³⁸ JP 2-0, III-7. JP 2-0 refers to the Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC). As noted in Footnote 33, the JICCENT is USCENTCOM's version of the JIOC.

³⁹ JP 2-0, III-7.

⁴⁰ U.S. Central Command Regulation 10-2, 28 September 2015, Appendix D.5.

⁴¹ In accordance with CJCS, "Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD) Modification 3, 040001Z OCT 11. DIA provides analysts in direct support to combatant commanders. JP 1-02 defines direct support as a "mission requiring a force to support another specific force and authorizing it to answer directly to the supported force's request for assistance."

The DIA Government civilian analysts assigned to USCENTCOM (and other combatant commands) Joint Intelligence Operations Centers (JIOCs) are hired,⁴² in-processed, paid, administered, trained, and professionally developed by the DIA.⁴³ The current DIA Director, Lieutenant General (LtGen) Vincent R. Stewart, U.S. Marine Corps, told us:

I am in theory responsible for the DIA employees that are assigned to the combatant commands to ensure tradecraft standards, analytic tradecraft and standards are adhered to, that they're organized, trained, and equipped to support the combatant commanders and any other customers that we support across the [Defense Intelligence] Enterprise.

The JICCEN Commander during the time period of the allegations at issue was another U.S. Navy captain, who served from August 2014 to July 2015. He was replaced by a U.S. Navy captain who took office on July 20, 2015.

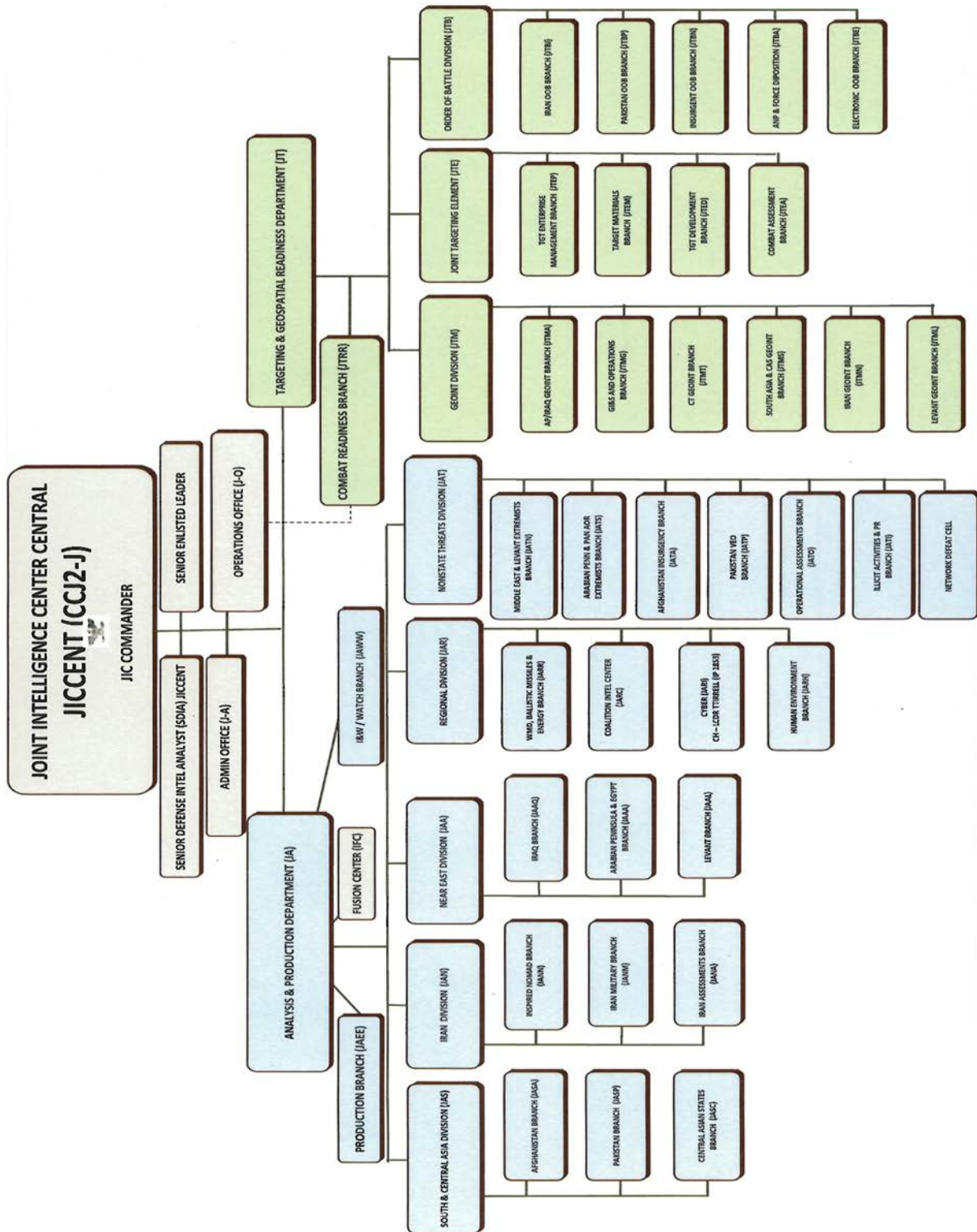
The JICCEN Commander is supported by a senior defense intelligence analyst (SDIA), who is a DIA DISL member. The SDIA during the time period covered by our investigation is Mr. Rizzio, who served in that position from July 2010 to November 2016. He was the senior advisor to the JICCEN Commander and the J2 and was responsible for ensuring the organization used proper tradecraft to produce and disseminate high-quality intelligence products for USCENTCOM.

The JICCEN is divided into two departments: (1) the Analysis and Production Department (CCJ2-JA), and (2) the Targeting and Geospatial Readiness Department (CCJ2-JT). The allegations addressed by our investigation relate to matters occurring within the Analysis and Production Department. Figure IV.B.1. on the next page depicts the JICCEN as of December 2014, just before MG Grove reorganized the Near East Division to consolidate support for OIR in January 2015 (this reorganization is discussed in more detail after Figure IV.B.1.).

⁴² However, some USCENTCOM Government civilian analysts were previously hired by the U.S. Air Force before 2008 (at the time the U.S. Air Force was hiring and staffing of civilian analysts at USCENTCOM). When JIOCs were created in 2008, these positions were transferred to the DIA.

⁴³ According to a USCENTCOM DIA staff director, the DIA publishes Tradecraft Notes as authority on how to apply analytic standards. DIA teaches courses both at DIA Headquarters and at USCENTCOM's Regional Joint Intelligence Training and Education Facility that cover analysis, writing, briefing, analytical standards, and tradecraft. On-line courses are also available. All new employees must complete an 8-week course on foundations of analysis within the first 2 years of employment. After successfully completing the courses and 3 years of experience, analysts are required to complete an advanced course that is also 8 weeks long. The DIA centrally tracks every employee's training progress. These requirements are uniform and common across the entire DIA, so if an employee transfers between a combatant command and the DIA, their training is recognized.

Figure IV.B.1. JICCENT Organization Chart (As of December 2014)



Key elements of the JICCENT were modified during the time period covered by our review. In June 2014, when MG Grove became the USCENTCOM J2, the CCJ2-JA (the Analysis and Production Department) consisted of five divisions: Near East (CCJ2-JAA); Iran (CCJ2-JAN); Regional (CCJ2-JAR); South and Central Asia (CCJ2-JAS); and Nonstate Threats (CCJ2-JAT); as well as two branches: (1) Indications & Warning/Watch (CCJ2-JAWW) and (2) Production (CCJ2-JAEE). Subordinate to each regional division were specific regional branches. Generally, each CCJ2-JA Division and Branch had a military Chief and civilian Senior Intelligence Officer (SIO), and was staffed by approximately 10 to 70 people.

In June 2014, the Near East Division, as well as the Nonstate Threats Division (JAT), were the CCJ2 divisions primarily responsible for intelligence related to the effort to degrade and destroy ISIL. At that time, the Near East Division had 120 personnel in three branches: (1) Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, Levant, and (2) Iraq.⁴⁴

In January 2015, MG Grove reorganized the Near East Division to consolidate support to OIR. A U.S. Army lieutenant colonel was placed in charge of the division. The division manages the branches that provide all-source intelligence analysis, production, and subject matter expertise on issues affecting vital U.S. and allied interests in the USCENTCOM AOR, in this case primarily to USCENTCOM and coalition countries in support of OIR. The branches under the newly reorganized Near East Division were the Iraq Branch (JAAQ), the Levant Branch (JAAL) and, replacing the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt Branch, the Middle East Extremist Branch (JAAT). The military and civilian leaders of those branches remained the same after the reorganization. The reorganization also placed two GG-15 positions to the division to perform additional intelligence product reviews. The support provided by the branches took the form of providing mission-critical, open-source information, and services in support of all-source analysis, information operations, targeting, plans, collection management, and training or exercises.

Our investigation primarily focused on matters related to the Near East Division. Most of the allegations focused on the operations in the branches of that division because the allegations suggested that intelligence was altered to present a more optimistic portrayal of USCENTCOM's efforts to degrade and destroy ISIL.

⁴⁴ JAA is the office symbol for the Near East Division. During our investigation, witnesses referred to the Near East Division in several ways, for example, the Levant and Iraq Division and JAA. For ease of understanding, we refer to the division as the Near East Division.

C. Overview of the USCENTCOM Intelligence Process

Defining Requirements

According to testimony and joint doctrine, intelligence production at USCENTCOM is primarily driven by the commander's information requirements in order to influence and shape his view of the operating environment.⁴⁵ The operating environment is all elements that the commander must consider to accomplish the mission, including physical areas and factors, and the information environment, and includes enemy, friendly, and neutral systems relevant to the operation.⁴⁶

The scope of the information that the commander requires to inform a view of the operating environment is defined as a set of complex and constantly interacting political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure systems.⁴⁷ The nature and interaction of these systems affect how the commander plans and conducts operations. Understanding these systems requires a range of information supplied not just by USCENTCOM staff elements, but by the Intelligence Community, other U.S. Government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, as well as friendly and coalition nations.

The USCENTCOM Commander communicates information requirements to his staff, by means of both guidance and Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR). The CCIRs consist of two components: (1) priority intelligence requirements (PIR), and (2) friendly force information requirements (FFIR).⁴⁸ The CCIRs are questions from the commander to the staff that require answers and drive the employment of limited staff resources. The CCIRs address gaps in the commander's information and are not designed to provide information that the commander already knows.

⁴⁵ JP 3-0, "Joint Operations," August 11, 2011, III-10.

⁴⁶ Id, at IV-1.

⁴⁷ Often abbreviated as "PMESII." JP 3-0, IV-4.

⁴⁸ JP 5-0, "Joint Operation Planning," August 11, 2011.

PIRs are information that a commander and staff need to understand the adversary or other relevant aspects of the operational environment.⁴⁹ The CCJ2 has primary staff responsibility for answering PIRs, and their production of intelligence is driven by the USCENTCOM Commander's PIR.⁵⁰

FFIR is information that a commander and staff need to understand the status of friendly force and supporting capabilities.⁵¹ The CCJ5 (Strategy, Plans and Policy Directorate) is the USCENTCOM staff proponent for developing FFIRs, and the CCJ3 (Operations Directorate) is the USCENTCOM staff proponent for monitoring FFIRs. FFIRs are information requirements rather than intelligence requirements, and the CCJ2 has only a supporting role in satisfying them.

CCJ2 Intelligence Production: Steady State (Pre-Crisis)

USCENTCOM routinely produces operational intelligence to support preventing and deterring war in its area of responsibility. In steady state production, JICCEN analysts provide routine intelligence products that generally are characterized by a longer-term analysis and focused on a longer outlook, although sometimes are focused on shorter-range outlooks. Analysts produce these products over several days or weeks, if time is available, to provide adequate time to collaborate with other subject matter experts in Defense and national intelligence organizations. The routine intelligence production process includes a pre-writing worksheet developed by the JICCEN Analytical Review Team (ART) to help the analyst structure an effective argument and document logic, evidence, and sources. The ART reviews this worksheet before the analyst start to write. Subordinate USCENTCOM intelligence organizations' products, such as joint task force's intelligence summary or a maritime activity report, would normally be one input that JICCEN analysts would consider, along with national- and theater-level products, intelligence message traffic, and other intelligence reporting, to fuse information and develop their assessment. Upon completion, the analyst would formally coordinate the intelligence product with appropriate subordinate units and external organizations. Finally, the product would be reviewed prior to publication.

⁴⁹ PIR includes not only information the commander needs to know about the adversary, but also information that may not be obvious at first. For example, it could include information on matters such as the civilian populations' disposition towards the adversary and its efforts or information about weather and terrain conditions that impact adversary operations, such as, whether heavy snows closed the roads the adversary is relying upon for supplies.

⁵⁰ JP 2-0. The CCJ5 has primary staff responsibility for answering FFIR. JP 5-0.

⁵¹ FFIRs are focused on friendly forces and supporting capabilities. For example, a FFIR may provide information regarding when a subordinate unit will complete its deployment to a theater of operations and be ready to begin offensive operations.

We found during our investigation that before MG Grove arrived in June 2014, JICCENT analysts operated with more independence. Witnesses testified that MG Grove's predecessor did not exercise centralized control for the review and approval of intelligence products. According to a JICCENT senior leader, unlike many previous J2s, MG Grove's predecessor sometimes did not see slides on intelligence products until they were briefed to him and the USCENTCOM J3 at morning briefings.

CCJ2 Intelligence Production: Shift to OIR Intelligence Product Production

As noted previously, the JICCENT underwent many changes after MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived and the onset of the OIR counter-ISIL campaign in June 2014. There was greater scrutiny of OIR counter-ISIL products; the Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) was activated; the Near East Division (JAA) was reorganized; and there was evolving guidance on CCJ2 intelligence product format, sourcing, approval authority, and official coordination. In addition, MG Grove decided to review OIR counter-ISIL products that went to GEN Austin. As discussed in this report, many of these changes occurred abruptly and without significant communication and guidance regarding the changes.

When the OIR counter-ISIL campaign began in June 2014, portions of the JICCENT switched from the routine intelligence products (focusing on long-term predictions) to intelligence products supporting tactical USCENTCOM operations. In addition, before the withdrawal of USCENTCOM forces from Iraq in 2011, USCENTCOM subordinate unit intelligence staffs in theater would normally produce tactical intelligence products. However, in 2014, the absence of deployed forces in theater forced the JICCENT to assume the lead, despite not being organized to provide tactical intelligence over a long period. Tactical intelligence is more detailed and time sensitive, and it often focuses on precise threat location, tracking individuals and groups, targeting, and post-attack assessment.

According to several witnesses, this change in focus increased both the volume and speed of the USCENTCOM Commander's information needs, and led to changes to product types, analytical focus, and terminology. For example, the JICCENT began an accelerated daily production cycle with intelligence summaries and analysis produced in hours instead of weeks, covering shorter periods (last 24 hours, next 48 to 96 hours), and providing more detail and evidence to support targeting.

In further response to changing operational requirements, in late June 2014, the JICCENT activated the IFC. The IFC was a crisis organization that provided intelligence support to the OIR counter-ISIL campaign, and it had dedicated workspace where analysts, targeting personnel, and watch floor could interact easily.

The JICCEN initially detailed personnel from its existing structure to the IFC, usually for periods of 30 to 90 days. Led by a GG-15 senior intelligence officer, analysts manned the IFC in shifts of up to 40 personnel, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The primary OIR counter-ISIL products produced by the CCJ2 were: (1) Intelligence Summary (INTSUM); (2) “First Look”; (3) Commander’s Daily Update (CDU); and (4) ISIL Assessment Tool. Details regarding these four intelligence products are in Part IV.D of this report.

As discussed below, evolving requirements triggered changes from the CCJ2’s routine, steady state organization and production cycle to one with an increased op-tempo to produce intelligence products tailored to the USCENTCOM Commander’s requirements.⁵²

⁵² As discussed in Part VII of this report, the transition to crisis production was not a one-step event. Instead, the JICCEN product lines evolved rapidly, changing several times, as CCJ2 shifted to a crisis production that satisfied the USCENTCOM Commander’s requirements.

D. USCENTCOM Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) Intelligence Products and the Product Creation Process

Based on the complaints and witness testimony, we identified four specific OIR-related USCENTCOM intelligence product types that were the main subject of the allegations and that warranted a closer review for evidence of potential falsification, distortion, delay, or suppression – OIR First Look, Intelligence Summary, Commander’s Daily Update, and the ISIL Assessment Tool. These were not the only intelligence products, but they were most relevant to this investigation. Other JICCENT-produced documents, many of which were included with these four products in the USCENTCOM Commander’s daily “Read Book” of intelligence products, are discussed as necessary later in this report.⁵³

The general processes for creating the First Look, INTSUM, and CDU OIR intelligence products were similar, but did vary because of changes in the timing of the production cycle, the number of reviewers, and review levels during the time period at issue. A different process existed for the ISIL Assessment Tool. The JICCENT Commander also provided a daily evening email called “night orders” to the JICCENT, including the Near East Division and IFC management, among others. This email, compiled after the meetings that regularly occurred during the day, emphasized intelligence priorities and provided updated guidance and requirements associated with the products.

Analysts normally began their analysis by framing the intelligence question and then gathering information (referred to as message traffic) relevant to their assigned task or area of responsibility. The message handling systems and their data outputs came from the same sources available to the entire Intelligence Community. The analysts synthesized the collected information, made assumptions when necessary, and drafted an analytic judgment. That judgment was reflected in a fused analytic product, the CDU, INTSUM, or First Look, which contained the supporting information and supporting arguments. Analysts then submitted products for review, which will be discussed later.

OIR First Look.

The OIR First Look was a PowerPoint graphic product summarizing tactical and operational force activities in Iraq and Syria during the previous 24-hour period. From mid-May 2014 to late 2015, First Look products were produced daily. After late 2015, it was produced Monday through Friday. The First Look was a document internal to USCENTCOM and was not shared externally.

⁵³ The JICCENT maintained a distinction between the OIR intelligence product line and the routine intelligence product line.

OIR Intelligence Summary (INTSUM)

The OIR Intelligence Summary was the narrative compliment to the First Look, a Word document produced daily which summarized OIR-related developments and assessments of the previous 24 to 72 hours. It was produced and reviewed similarly to the First Look, and it was also reviewed by senior analysts in the IFC and finalized by midnight each day. It was included in the commander's read book and disseminated by the CCJ2 through the CCJ2 homepage. During 2014 through 2015, the INTSUM was produced Monday through Friday and posted on the USCENTCOM JWICS portal.

Commander's Daily Update (CDU).

The CDU was a topic-specific PowerPoint graphic product, with supporting assessment, relating to a specific issue within USCENTCOM's area of responsibility, such as interaction with humanitarian organizations and issues regarding persons displaced because of the conflict. CDUs were prepared by analysts in response to significant reporting from Intelligence Community agencies or in response to USCENTCOM leadership questions and direction, and reviewed by senior analysts at the branch and division levels, as well as Mr. Rizzio who, after review and approval, forwarded them to MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman. The CDU was posted on the USCENTCOM JWICS portal.

OIR ISIL Assessment Tool

The ISIL Assessment Tool was a repeatable, structured analytical technique used to assess trends in ISIL's operational and strategic capability. Analysts in the Middle East and the Levant Extremist Branches produced the monthly ISIL Assessment Tool. GG-15 senior intelligence officers reviewed and adjusted the monthly assessment, as necessary, and forwarded it to CCJ2 senior officials, including MG Grove, for review discussion, adjustment, approval, and dissemination within USCENTCOM.

Counter-ISIL Intelligence Product Review Process

Prior to the JICCENT reorganization in January 2015, analytic products underwent a multi-level review that included the branch or team chief; division chief; the IFC, and senior defense intelligence analyst. These reviews were designed to ensure analytic rigor and quality, although the second and third levels of review would sometimes be combined, depending on reviewer availability.⁵⁴ For example, Mr. Rizzio, the SDIA and a third-level reviewer, stated

⁵⁴ According to DIA DI Tradecraft Note 08-09, the first review (branch or team level) focuses on fundamentals of the analytic argument and ensures collaboration and coordination, acknowledgements, proper markings, and releasability. The second-level review (division) focuses on quality of analytic expression, and considers biases, assumptions, evidence, logic, and confidence levels. The third-level review (senior defense intelligence analyst)

that if he was unavailable, the SIO (division chief/second-level reviewer) or the JICCENT Commander would review the product. The product was reviewed at each intermediate level for tradecraft and quality, and could be edited and sent forward at any level or returned for additional work as necessary.

After Mr. Rizzio reviewed a product, he would send it simultaneously to MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman for review, edits, or comments before MG Grove approved or disapproved the product for publication.

Each intelligence product needed to be provided to MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman in sufficient time for their review and edits before distribution. For example, if a First Look slide needed to be distributed by 5:30 a.m. to prepare for a 7:00 a.m. slide review and rehearsal before a 10:00 a.m. briefing, Mr. Rizzio would be in the office at 3:00 a.m. to review the products with the analysts and send the products to MG Grove by 4:30 a.m. Similarly, to have an INTSUM product ready for distribution at 7:00 a.m., it would have to be provided to MG Grove no later than 5:00 a.m.

Feedback from edits by MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and other reviewers could come through email, face-to-face conversation, telephone, or video teleconference (VTC), as well as line-in-line-out edits, “passdown notes,” or “turnover notes” from analysts to their shift replacements. Additionally, the JICCENT, the Near East Division, and IFC leaders could give feedback to supervisors and expect those leaders to further disseminate the feedback to all analysts. The level and frequency of feedback varied, which we discuss in more detail throughout this report. In particular, on some occasions, an intelligence product produced by one analyst during the day may have been considerably edited or withdrawn from the production line after that analyst had left for the day. The reasons, however, for these actions or edits to original analyst’s proposed product may not have been communicated to that analyst before publishing the final version of the intelligence product.

Not every proposed intelligence product underwent this extensive review process to the J2/VJ2 level or received final approval. However, during our review, typically, products that made it through the review process received final approval at the J2/VJ2 level.

After approval, the intelligence product was distributed to the USCENTCOM Commander and other USCENTCOM elements and the process started over again. The

examines the product from the customer’s perspective, as well as how a product answers reader questions, details alternative analysis, and other factors pertinent to customer’s portfolio or sphere of influence. This reviewer also checks that the product highlights consistencies, changes, or differences with other DIA, defense intelligence, or Intelligence Community analysis.

INTSUM, CDU, and First Look were created on a nearly daily basis and edited and commented upon throughout the day before ultimately being approved by MG Grove.

In addition to the four products our investigation focused upon, a brief mention of the other products the CCJ2 produced provides some context of the CCJ2 workload. These included:

- **Summary Intelligence Report (SIR):** Based on one or more Intelligence Community reports, it is a one-paragraph discussion and assessment of a developing issue used build the Commander's Executive Intelligence Highlights and Daily Intelligence Summary.
- **Commander's Executive Intelligence Highlights (CEIH):** A daily 4 to 5 page compilation of SIRs that contain brief updates and analyst comments on specific events
- **Daily Intelligence Summary (DISUM):** An executive summary of daily intelligence highlights across the AOR, again based on SIRs.
- **J2 Weekly Update:** Formerly known as the "Weekly Activity Report," this provides a theater-wide assessment of USCENTCOM's AOR, and is created from analyst input given to and reviewed by Mr. Rizzio and Mr. Ryckman before final approval by MG Grove, who then sent it to the DNI, the USD(I), the DIA Director, the Joint Staff J2, and others.
- **Joint Intelligence Highlight (JIH):** A short assessment on a distinct issue or trend, AOR-wide. It is produced periodically and is similar to a CDU but lengthier (1 to 2 pages).
- **Joint Intelligence Notes (JIN):** A short assessment (1 to 3 pages) on a distinct issue or trend to provide a quick response to a specific question.

As mentioned previously, the J2 and JICCENT produced a hardcopy Read Book for GEN Austin based on products largely published the previous day by both the CCJ2 and external Intelligence Community elements.

One other intelligence product of significance to this report, and discussed in greater detail later, is the President's Daily Brief (PDB). It is a daily product from the Intelligence Community, produced and coordinated by the DNI staff, and provided each day to the President.

E. Standards Related to This Investigation

In conducting this investigation, we reviewed the allegations and applied the standards on the creation and analysis of intelligence products to the allegations and evidence at issue. Those standards are briefly discussed below.

50 U.S.C. § 3003. Definitions

50 U.S.C. § 3003 states that the term Intelligence Community includes the Office of the Director of National Intelligence; the Central Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; the National Reconnaissance Office; other offices within the Department of Defense for the collection of specialized intelligence through reconnaissance programs; the intelligence elements of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Energy, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of the Treasury, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security, and such other elements of any department or agency as may be designated by the President, or designated jointly by the Director of National Intelligence and the head of the department or agency concerned, as an element of the Intelligence Community.

50 U.S.C. § 3024. Responsibilities and authorities of the Director of National Intelligence

50 U.S.C. § 3024 states that the Director of National Intelligence shall implement policies and procedures throughout the Intelligence Community to encourage sound analytic methods and tradecraft, ensure that analysis is based on all available sources, and ensure competitive analysis of analytic products is regularly done.

Intelligence Community Directives (ICDs)

ICDs are published by the DNI, as the head of the Intelligence Community created by Executive Order 12333. ICDs are the DNI's principal means of providing guidance, policy, and direction to the Intelligence Community. Although ICDs do not apply by their terms to USCENTCOM or the other combatant commands (because combatant commands are not members of the Intelligence Community), the ICDs apply in practice because the DoD has incorporated them as standards for intelligence produced by combatant commands. For example, when discussing analysis and production, JP 2-0 (which does apply to combatant commands) states, "[a]ll source intelligence should comply with *Intelligence Community Directive #203, Analytic Standards*."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ JP 2-0, I-16.

Additionally, a Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, execution order (EXORD) provides common principles for Joint Intelligence Operations Centers (JIOCs) to use and specifically states that JIOCs will conduct all-source intelligence analysis in accordance with accepted DoD and Intelligence Community methods and standards.⁵⁶

Moreover, DIA employees are trained on ICD standards, including ICD 203, and apply them in their work. As noted above, the DIA provides many of the analysts that make up USCENTCOM's analytic workforce.⁵⁷

The ICDs relevant to this investigation are ICD 203, "Analytic Standards;" ICD 206, "Sourcing Requirements for Disseminated Analytic Products;" and ICD 208, "Write for Maximum Utility."

1. *ICD 203, "Analytic Standards."* This standard establishes analytic standards that govern the production and evaluation of national intelligence analysis.

ICD 203 describes the qualities intelligence should have but does not prescribe a way to obtain them.⁵⁸

The June 21, 2007, version of ICD 203 stated that analytical elements will apply the Intelligence Community analytic standards in a manner appropriate to the length, purpose, classification, and production timeframe of each product. The January 2, 2015, version of ICD 203 also directs the standards to "be applied in each analytical product in a manner appropriate to its purpose, the type, and scope of its underlying source information, its production timeline, and its customers."

ICD 203 contains five analytic standards for analytical products:

- Objectivity. Analysts must be objective and aware of their own assumptions and reasoning. They must use reasoning techniques and practical mechanisms that reveal and mitigate bias. Analysts must be alert to influences caused by existing analytic positions or judgments and be able to consider alternate perspectives and

⁵⁶ CJCS, "Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC)" Execute Order (EXORD), 031640Z APR 06.

⁵⁷ As of February 2016, there were approximately 520 DIA civilian authorizations at CCJ2. The DIA provides the bulk of the analytic workforce for all the combatant commands, not just CENTCOM.

⁵⁸ ICD 203 states that its Intelligence Community Analytic Standards are the core principles of intelligence analysis and will be applied throughout the Intelligence Community, and applied to each analytic product in a manner appropriate to its purpose, the type and scope of the underlying source information, its production timeline, and its customers. It does not prescribe how this is to be accomplished. Additionally, USCENTCOM, through its JICCEN, incorporated ICD 203 into its JICCEN Organizations and Functions Handbook (April 22, 2015), and applies it to the USCENTCOM analysts.

contrary reporting. They should not be so constrained by previous judgments that they cannot act when new developments indicate a modification is necessary.

- Independent of political considerations. Analytic assessments must not be distorted by, nor shaped for, advocacy of a particular audience, agenda, or policy viewpoint. Analytic judgments must not be influenced by the force of preference for a particular policy.
- Timeliness. Analysis must be delivered in time for it to be acted upon. Analytic elements are responsible for being continually aware of events of interest, of customer activities and schedules, and of intelligence requirements and priorities to provide useful analysis at the right time.
- Based on all available sources of intelligence. Analysis should consider all relevant available information and identify and address critical information gaps and work with collection activities and data providers to develop access and collection strategies.
- Implement and Exhibit Analytic Tradecraft Standards. Analytic products should describe the quality and credibility of sources, data, and methodologies used; express and explain any uncertainties associated with major judgments; incorporate and analyze the alternatives considered; and explain how their major judgments on a topic are consistent with or different from previous products.

2. *ICD 206, “Sourcing Requirements for Disseminated Analytic Products.”* ICD 206 requires that sourcing information be included in covered analytic products. Sourcing information enhances the credibility and transparency of the analysis and helps the reader make an informed assessment of the quality and scope of sources supporting the analysis. The assessments are based primarily on intelligence reports, diplomatic reports, or publicly available information, and also describe the strengths and weaknesses in the source base, which sources are most important to key judgments, what sources corroborate or conflict, and also highlight any specific subject matter expertise used to develop the assessment.

3. *ICD 208, “Writing for Maximum Utility.”* ICD 208 establishes fundamental intelligence production principles and a common perspective from which to plan, organize, write, and disseminate intelligence products that provide the greatest use to customers. It directs Intelligence Community elements to use the “Write for Maximum Utility” construct that allows for multiple ways to achieve the objective using the established principles.

Executive Order 12333, “United States Intelligence Activities”

As amended by Executive Orders 13284 (2003), 13355 (2004), and 13470 (2008), EO 12333 establishes the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) as the head of the Intelligence Community, and states that the DNI shall establish objectives, priorities, and guidance for the Intelligence Community to ensure timely and effective collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence, of whatever nature and from whatever source derived. The Executive Order prescribes the duties and responsibilities of each element of the Intelligence Community, and states that Intelligence Community elements within executive departments shall serve the information and intelligence needs of their respective heads of departments and shall also operate as part of an integrated Intelligence Community, as provided in law or by the Executive Order.

Additionally, as amended, Executive Order 12333 states that the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) shall collect, analyze, produce, or, through tasking and coordination, provide defense and defense-related intelligence for the Secretary of Defense, the CJCS, combatant commanders, other Defense components, and non-Defense agencies.

DoD Directive (DoDD)5143.01, “Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)),” October 24, 2014

DoDD 5143.01 sets forth the USD(I)’s responsibilities and functions as the Principal Staff Assistant and advisor on intelligence to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense. For Defense Intelligence analysis, the USD(I) ensures that analysis is aligned with Intelligence Community and DoD analytical concepts, methodologies, and tradecraft standards. For operational support, the USD(I) develops and oversees implementation of policy, program, plans, and guidance for Defense Intelligence warfighting support to the combatant commands. The USD(I) evaluates and oversees DIA, NSA, NGA, and NRO activities to ensure effective support to DoD and U.S. Government interagency operations and activities. This Directive applies to the combatant commands.

DoDD 5105.21, “Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA),” March 18, 2008

Under the USD(I)’s authority, direction, and control, the Director, DIA, advises the Secretary of Defense, the CJCS, and the combatant commanders on all matters concerning all-source Defense Intelligence. Regarding all-source intelligence analysis, the Director is required to manage, organize, train, and develop DIA analysts and Defense Intelligence workforce and provide and evaluate all-source intelligence products in a timely manner to meet customer

needs.⁵⁹ In addition, the Director should conduct DIA workforce training and, as directed by the USD(I), oversee general intelligence training activities within the DoD.

The Director, DIA, is also required to assign defined all-source intelligence analytical responsibilities within the DIA and to each combatant command and Military Service Intelligence Center based on capabilities, workforce characteristics, and mission requirements, and manage capabilities to maintain a surge capability.

DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3305.02, “DoD General Intelligence Training and Certification,” August 12, 2015

DoDI 3305.02 establishes DoD policy to develop and maintain general intelligence training and certification programs that support DoD missions and ensure that such programs are operationally and technically sound and focus on developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) associated with joint intelligence cycles outlined in JP 2-0. The Instruction assigns the Director, DIA, as the DoD general intelligence training and certification functional manager. This applies to combatant commands and the Defense agencies.

DoDI 3305.14, “Joint Intelligence Training (JIT) and Certification,” August 18, 2015

DoDI 3305.14 establishes DoD policy to develop and maintain joint intelligence training (JIT) and certification programs that support DoD missions are operationally and technically sound, focus on intelligence support to the warfighter, and support the development of the KSAs required to perform joint intelligence tasks and incorporate those into other joint training programs. The Director, DIA, coordinates with the CJCS to establish and conduct joint training programs based on agency mission-essential tasks for combat support to combatant commands and incorporates joint intelligence KSAs into DoD and Intelligence Community functional competencies, training, and certification standards.

Combatant Command Standards

1. JP 2-0, “Joint Intelligence,” October 22, 2013.

As the keystone document for joint intelligence, JP 2-0 provides fundamental principles and guidance for intelligence support to joint operations. It states that all-source intelligence should comply with ICD 203. It applies to the joint staff, combatant commanders, subunified commands, joint task forces, the Services, and others. Its guidance is considered authoritative and must be followed except when, in the commander’s judgment, exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.

⁵⁹ DoD Instruction 3115.17, “Management and Oversight of DoD All-Source Analysis,” November 16, 2016, establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for the management and oversight of DoD all-source analysis.

Because the primary role of joint intelligence is to provide information and assessments to help accomplish the mission, JP 2-0 lists a series of specific responsibilities to guide the J2 directorate and supporting organizations. These responsibilities include keeping the commander informed; describing the operational environment; identifying, defining, and nominating objectives; supporting the planning and execution of options; countering adversary deception and surprise; supporting friendly deception efforts; and assessing the effectiveness of operations.

In addition to setting forth the J2's specific responsibilities, JP 2-0 sets out certain overarching joint intelligence principles designed to maximize the effectiveness of the intelligence provided. The principles are: (1) perspective (think like the adversary); (2) synchronizing intelligence with plans and operations; (3) integrity (remaining intellectually honest); (4) unity of effort (cooperating to achieve a common end state); (5) prioritizing requirements based on command guidance; (6) striving for excellence; (7) accepting the risk of predicting adversary intentions; (8) agility; (9) collaboration (leveraging the expertise of diverse analytic resources); and (10) fusion (exploiting all sources of information and intelligence).

JP 2-0 also states that intelligence analysts should distinguish between what is known with confidence based on facts and what are untested assumptions. It assigns three levels of confidence in analytic judgments – low, medium, and high. Low confidence levels are based upon uncorroborated information from good or marginal sources; marginal confidence levels are based upon partially corroborated information from good sources; and high confidence levels are based upon well-corroborated information from proven sources.

For unity and simplicity purposes, the J2 should be the single focal point for assessing and presenting the commander with any disparate intelligence assessments from outside agencies or analysts. The J2 is also responsible for ensuring that the full spectrum of opinions and views obtained through collaboration is considered in formulating the joint force's intelligence products.

2. *CJCS, "Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC)" Execute Order (EXORD), 031640Z APR 06, as modified by Modification 3, 040001Z OCT 11.*

This modification to the execute order, issued by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in October 2011, states that JIOCs will conduct all-source intelligence analysis in accordance with accepted DoD and Intelligence Community methods and standards, and that combat support and Defense agency (DIA, NGA, NSA, NRO, DSS) personnel or resources assigned or attached to the JIOCs are in direct support of the respective JIOC. This execute order, and its modification, applies to combatant commands, the Services, Defense agencies, and combat support agencies.

V. CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

The following table lists a chronology of key events that are related to this investigation. While this unclassified version does not contain every event, it provides a general timeline of key events that are relevant to the allegations we investigated.

Table V.1. Chronology of Events

Date	Events
2005	The CCJ2 establishes the Red Team, consisting of four personnel, within the CCJ2 Plans Section, not within the JICCEN. The Red Team provides alternative analysis to support planning and wargaming to validate assumptions about the enemy.
July 6, 2010	Mr. Rizzio assumes duty as the Senior Defense Intelligence Analyst within the JICCEN.
December 2011	U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq.
2011	Mr. Rizzio creates the formal analytical tradecraft program to improve tradecraft within the CCJ2 through training and coaching and to assist with the review of intelligence products.
March 22, 2013	GEN Austin assumes command of USCENTCOM from his predecessor, Gen Mattis.
April 8, 2013	The creation of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is announced by its leader.
Summer of 2013	USCENTCOM disbands the Red Team in order to assign the four-person authorization to other planning efforts.
May 4, 2014	Mr. Ryckman arrives at USCENTCOM and assumes duty as the Vice Director, CCJ2, replacing his predecessor, who retired.
May 8, 2014	Analysts in the JICCEN Iraq branch recommend the WATCHCON level for Warning Indicators for Iraq Stability be raised.
May 9, 2014	MG Grove's predecessor disapproves this recommendation to raise the WATCHCON level.
June 9, 2014	MG Grove assumes duties as the Director of Intelligence, USCENTCOM.
June 10, 2014	ISIL seizes Mosul, Iraq, and the Government of Iraq declares a State of Emergency.
June 11, 2014	ISIL seizes Tikrit, Iraq.

Date	Events
June 20, 2014	MG Grove activates the CCJ2 Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) to “fuse” all intelligence information related to the counter-ISIL campaign. The IFC begins operations on a 24-hour, 7-days a week schedule, using analysts pulled from different branches to work in rotating 12-hour shifts of 3 days on and 3 days off. Analysts in the IFC encounter a severely degraded intelligence collection capability since the last U.S. troops departed Iraq in December 2011. The CCJ2 also produces intelligence products that are more tactically focused and produced on a shorter publication cycle. In addition, the CCJ2 routinely provides information on the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), who are friendly forces. Such reporting is normally the responsibility of the J3 or J5. As a result, the CCJ2 retained the staff lead for reporting ISF activities on the battlefield, as well as that of the enemy force – ISIL.
June 29, 2014	ISIL declares a caliphate and outlines its vision to expand further into the Middle East and Europe.
August 2-3, 2014	ISIL seizes Kurdish towns of Sinjar and Zumar, forcing thousands of Yazidi civilians to flee their homes.
August 3, 2014	ISIL seizes the Mosul Dam on the Tigris river, which provides flood control, water, and electricity to Mosul’s 1.7 million residents.
August 8, 2014	USCENTCOM begins airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq.
August 14, 2014	A U.S. Navy captain assumes duties as the Commander, JICCENT. According to the captain, he finds a workforce that is tired, working long hours, and is frustrated because some analysts believe they had warned of ISIL’s advance previously but leadership was resistant to publishing it.
September 22, 2014	USCENTCOM begins airstrikes against ISIL targets in Syria.
October 1, 2014	A USCENTCOM briefing slide regarding the effect of the counter-ISIL air campaign prepared by a JICCENT staff officer, is provided to the Office of the Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff, Pentagon, and included in the read book for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. MG Grove saw and approved a different version of the slide. GEN Austin informs MG Grove of his displeasure that the slide was released without senior leadership approval.
October 2, 2014	During the morning counter-ISIL campaign Operations and Intelligence brief, MG Grove admonishes the JICCENT staff officer, who briefed the slide, allegedly stating “just get on stick with the [briefing] script.” This JICCENT staff officer told us he believed this public admonishment had a “chilling effect” on analysts. The staff officer also told us that MG Grove yelled at him in his office regarding his displeasure with the slide.
October 2, 2014	GEN Austin directs a change in intelligence production, including revising the intelligence summary (INTSUM) from approximately 15 pages to a shorter, executive level product of about 3 pages, to provide more of a top level summary of major events rather than a recitation of many details that had previously been included in the larger document.

Date	Events
October 7, 2014	MG Grove modifies analysts' authority to officially represent (also known as "coordinate") the position of USCENTCOM on national level intelligence products. MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman retain the authority to formally coordinate for USCENTCOM on intelligence products staffed by other organizations. However, according to MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and other witnesses, analysts are still authorized to conduct "analyst to analyst exchanges" external to USCENTCOM on counter-ISIL campaign topics. However, some analysts believed that all coordination and collaboration with analysts outside USCENTCOM was prohibited.
October 8, 2014	At Mr. Rizzio's request, Mr. Ryckman meets with approximately 15 intelligence analysts, primarily from the Iraq, Syria, and Middle East Extremist Branches, to address their concerns regarding intelligence production, including focusing on good news. Following Mr. Ryckman's departure from the meeting, analysts raised the topic of "cooking the books" with Mr. Rizzio.
October 10, 2014	The JICCENT Commander announces a new GG-15 Senior Intelligence Officer (SIO) in the Intelligence Fusion Center who will be responsible for reviewing all intelligence products related to the counter-ISIL campaign.
October 15, 2014	USCENTCOM announces that "Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR)" has been designated as the overseas contingency operation against ISIL.
October 22-24, 2014	According to a witness, at a commander's conference in Qatar held October 22-24, 2014, GEN Austin states, "we're going to win this fight, we're going to find a way, we got a plan, ... one important thing though is that we have to manage the narrative, like this nonsense that Anbar is about to collapse." The USCENTCOM historian's notes from the meeting indicate that GEN Austin "emphasized the importance of keeping the narrative in the right place as the narrative on the counter-ISIL campaign was beginning to spin out of control."
On or about October 29, 2014	ISIL reportedly killed dozens of local tribesmen in Hit, Iraq, eventually killing many local tribesmen and forcing thousands to flee.
Between December 2014 and January 2015	Mr. Ryckman asks an SIO if he believes "we [J2 senior leaders] were 'cooking the books.'" The SIO tells Mr. Ryckman that he did not think anyone was "deliberately altering intelligence, but we are being held to a higher standard to tell the contradictory narrative than what the folks who are creating that narrative [deployed operational leaders] are being held to."

Date	Events
January 1, 2015	MG Grove modifies the organization of the Near East Division to align all branches within the Division focusing on the counter-ISIL campaign. The Iraq and Levant Branches remain in the Near East Division, and the Middle East Extremist Branch – which focused on ISIL – is moved into the Near East Division. An U.S. Army lieutenant colonel assumes duties as the Near East Division Chief, and two GG-15 SIOs are assigned to the Near East Division. Complainant 1 alleged that this realignment and addition of two GG-15s was another effort by CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders to control the narrative through their review and editing of intelligence products.
January 8, 2015	Mr. Rizzio has a “heated discussion” with MG Grove, who informed him the OIR intelligence products are unsatisfactory because they lack analytical rigor, including adequate sourcing and analysis based on evidence.
January 12-16, 2015	Mr. Rizzio takes annual leave and decides to remain at USCENTCOM. MG Grove later apologizes to Mr. Rizzio.
February 15, 2015	Complainant 1 writes an intelligence summary regarding an ISIL attack on Al Asad Air Base, in Iraq, which is modified through the editing process. Complainant 1 asserted the edited modifications mischaracterized the attack from a “successful” ISIL attack to an “unsuccessful” ISIL attack.
March 3, 2015	GEN Austin testifies at a House Armed Services Committee hearing titled “The President’s Proposed Authorization of Use of Force Against ISIL and U.S. Policy, Strategy, and Posture in the Greater Middle East.”
March 26, 2015	GEN Austin testifies at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing titled “FY16 Defense Authorization.”
May 17, 2015	ISIL seizes Ramadi.
May 28, 2015	Two complaints are forwarded to the DIA IG alleging that CCJ2 senior intelligence officials falsified, distorted, delayed, or suppressed intelligence analysis.
May 29, 2015	At a regularly scheduled CCJ2 JICCENT production meeting attended by Mr. Rizzio and approximately 21 senior USCENTCOM analysts, Mr. Rizzio allegedly states, “There seems to be a perception that senior leaders are cooking the intel books,” adding he had discussed this matter with MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman, and that both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman lean toward “high confidence assessments.”
May 30, 2015	The DoD OIG Hotline receives the two complaints from DIA IG.
June 1, through August 25, 2015	The DoD OIG reviews the classified complaints, obtains and reviews relevant classified documents, and conducts two separate clarification interviews with each of the complainants.
September 1, 2015	The DoD OIG initiates a full investigation of the allegations contained in this report.

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGATIONS

A. Alleged Falsification of Intelligence

Allegation of Falsification of Intelligence

We investigated Complainant 1's allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders falsified intelligence assessments to support a USCENTCOM narrative that that Iraqi forces, with U.S. help, were performing well on the battlefield, while ISIL was struggling. Complainant 1 alleged that administrative and organizational changes were directed by CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders to establish and maintain control of analyst and analytic leaders in order to sustain this narrative.

Complainant 1 did not provide us with any intelligence assessments that he believed were falsified; instead, he referred us to analysts who he believed would have examples to support his allegation that intelligence was falsified. He did provide us with examples of intelligence assessments he believed were distorted or not reported on, such as the product relating to ISIL's breaching of the Al Assad Air Base on February 13, 2015; that the topic of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) was being "dialed back in general"; or the WATCHCON not being changed in a timely way. These examples are discussed in detail in Part VI.B of the classified report.

Complainant 2 did not specifically allege that USCENTCOM intelligence products were "falsified." Rather, he alleged that intelligence was produced in violation of ICD 203, through "routine, intentional re-writing or suppression of intelligence products that do not conform with their preconceived ideas, or that conflict with the command's 'narrative' concerning the state of the campaign against ISIL that they wish to uphold," and the intentional withholding of information from DIA HQ by CCJ2 senior leaders "intended to undermine DIA's intelligence production."

We interviewed witnesses throughout USCENTCOM, and elsewhere regarding the allegation of falsification, including 28 of the 29 witnesses the complainants identified as having knowledge related to their allegations.⁶⁰

We asked the witnesses for examples or evidence of intelligence that was false or falsified. We also asked if they believed USCENTCOM leaders falsified intelligence products.

None of the witnesses provided any documents or other evidence to support the allegation that intelligence had been falsified. Only a very few believed that intelligence was falsified, and we describe their testimony in the classified version of this report. None provided us any specific

⁶⁰ As previously noted, we did not interview one former analyst who left Federal service, who initially agreed to be interviewed by us, but ultimately did not respond to repeated attempts to schedule an interview.

examples of intelligence that contained facts that were inaccurate or untrue, and none provided us any evidence that the J2 senior leadership changed intelligence products with the intent to deceive or to put forward facts or analysis that the senior leadership knew or believed to be untrue.

However, as we discuss in the next section of the report, many witnesses described changes to intelligence products as distortion of intelligence instead of instances in which the alleged changes produced intelligence that was false or untrue.

For instance, one supervisor in a CCJ2 branch initially told us he believed that there was intentional falsification of intelligence. He stated, “[he] tried to stay out of the Iraq piece of this as much as [he] could,” but that he “inferred from what was going on” that the changes were “subtle” and designed to “not portray the situation as dire as it [was].” However, he did not assert falsification nor did he provide any examples of intelligence products changed to make facts untrue, or provide information that anyone knowingly or intentionally changed to make false. Rather, his testimony and examples related more to how intelligence was portrayed – whether the overall intelligence picture was skewed or distorted, as opposed to being false or factually untrue.

Similarly, a senior analyst in another CCJ2 branch told us, “There is probably a spectrum of narrative manipulation. Falsifying being the far end of that spectrum. Off the top of my head I cannot speak to falsification, but manipulation, watering down, hedging, or preventing from running all together, those are the sort of practices I am talking about.”

A senior analyst in the JICCEN stated, “I wouldn’t say falsified, but definitely change and influence.”

A CCJ2 branch leader told us, “I don’t think it’s falsified, [but] yeah, maybe some gradient of distorting the original message.”

An intelligence analyst in a CCJ2 branch told us, “I don’t like the word ‘falsified,’ but distorted or – we used watered down earlier. That’s probably more accurate.”

An analyst told us, “So falsified obviously is the strongest word on that scale and I don’t want to use that word. I would say that there are pieces of traffic – it’s changed.”

However, we were contacted during our investigation by a former IFC supervisor who told us that he believed that intelligence was falsified. Specifically, he considered edits to analysts’ intelligence products as a falsification of intelligence. He told us that reinterpreting the work of intelligence analysts because of its alarming nature was wrong.

This same witness told us that Mr. Rizzio arrived at 3:45 a.m. each day to review the intelligence products and associated sources. He added that Mr. Rizzio frequently commented when reviewing intelligence products “that’s impossible, I don’t get that when I read [source packets],” and would make the analysts re-do all the slides because he believed them to be wrong.

The same witness also stated that the changes occurred every night and portrayed less success for ISIL and more success for the ISF. He added that he believed the changes amounted to falsification of intelligence. Additionally, he stated that the intelligence assessments presented at the daily Theater Update Assessment briefing to GEN Austin were more positive than what was presented by the commander who was deployed in Iraq.

Yet, the witness did not provide any documents to support his statements. He identified six other individuals he believed would support what he told us. We interviewed all six witnesses that he identified. They stated that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders engaged in editing of intelligence products, but none described the results of those edits as falsification.

Many other USCENTCOM witnesses we interviewed during our investigation strongly denied the allegation that intelligence was falsified. We provide the following samples of these witness's testimony.

For example, the JICCENT Commander told us, "I think that assertion [that intelligence assessments were falsified] is false."

A senior analyst in a CCJ2 Division told us, "I would say that's a negative. I've never seen – I've never seen, heard, or even heard anybody claim CENTCOM falsified intelligence."

Another senior analyst had "no knowledge" of the J2 senior intelligence leaders falsifying intelligence. The analyst added, "They may have different assessments, but they are not, I don't believe they're falsifying the actual evidence."

A military analyst told us, "I don't have any knowledge of that. I know that the allegation exists."

Another senior analyst told us the changes to intelligence products were made as part of the review process and conducted with professionalism and good intentions. Furthermore, the analyst stated that there was not any "nefarious activity where people are falsifying documents for some kind of purpose."

We also interviewed senior intelligence leaders from organizations outside USCENTCOM. They said they had no knowledge or evidence that USCENTCOM intelligence was falsified.

For instance, the former Deputy Director for Middle East, Middle East Africa Regional Center (MARC), DIA, who was responsible for managing intelligence analysis for all the Middle East, including Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant, as well as South Asia, Iraq, and Iran told us he had never seen an instance of MG Grove falsifying of intelligence information in order to promote any kind of objective.

An admiral on the J2, Joint Staff, Pentagon, who was responsible for providing strategic warning to the Chairman and other 20 senior members of the Joint Staff, and for analysis for the Chairman and other senior members of the staff told us, “I’m absolutely not aware of any deliberate attempt by Grove, Ryckman, [the JICCENT Commander], or Rizzio to falsify, distort, or delay intelligence.”

Director James Clapper, Jr., Director, Office of National Intelligence, told us regarding the alleged falsification:

No, I can’t point to any of that. Again these are – we often have disagreements. There could be disagreements here. But, generally speaking they’re done with the best motives where people feel strongly looking at the same evidence they’ll draw different conclusions about assessments. There may well have been that, but intentionally manipulated, I can’t – I just don’t, I can’t point to any evidence that I’m aware of that would substantiate that.

We also interviewed USCENTCOM and CCIJ2 senior intelligence officials and asked them to respond to the allegation intelligence was falsified by imposing a narrative that Iraqi forces, with U.S. help, were performing well on the battlefield, while ISIL was struggling. Each of them denied the allegation.

GEN Austin, Commander, USCENTCOM, from 2013 to 2016, told us, “Well, that’s the first I’ve actually heard of the actual complaint that was filed, and I will tell you that I don’t have any knowledge of ... any type of activity such as that.”

Mr. Rizzio stated:

I would not agree with that and you have to take a look at the body of reporting that we put out over a period of time and then take a look at what was going on by other folks. We did the best we could given the information that we had available, given the requirement from the management to be the, the J2 and the VJ2, to be objective and balanced. And that’s what we attempted to do to the best of our ability.

Mr. Ryckman responded, “I disagree with [the allegation that intelligence assessments were falsified].” He continued:

There was no creation of a false narrative. I think there’s plenty of documents that were published by this Headquarters that actually don’t say that, to include the ISIL Assessment Tool, which if you work your way through that there’s – that’s not a rosy picture story in terms of that Assessment Tool.

MG Grove responded, “No, in terms of a directed narrative, no.”

Through our search of USCENTCOM emails and intelligence assessments, we found no documentary evidence to support the allegations. For example, we found no emails indicating that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders, or anyone else involved in the editing process, wrote or distributed what they knew to be factually false intelligence in any product or produced any intelligence assessment that they did not believe was accurate or supported.

Conclusions Regarding Alleged Falsification of Intelligence

The allegation that intelligence was falsified is the most extreme aspect of the allegations we investigated, and the evidence and testimony we found did not substantiate this allegation. We considered intelligence to be “falsified” if USCENTCOM leaders or analysts wrote, edited, or produced intelligence products that they knew were factually inaccurate or that they knew presented an inaccurate assessment of the subject matter of the intelligence.

The few witnesses that described the intelligence assessments as false did not provide specific examples that supported that allegation. They also did not point out, and we did not find, specific intelligence products that contained false – untrue – facts or analysis.

Certainly, many witnesses believed that intelligence was distorted and that the USCENTCOM intelligence products presented a more positive assessment of the success of the ISF and the failures of ISIL than they believed the intelligence warranted. In the next section of this report, we discuss in detail these allegations of distortion and the evidence supporting them. Much of the dispute regarding alleged distortion centers around concerns that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leadership, particularly MG Grove, had a different assessment of the intelligence, valued certain inputs more than others, or imposed different burdens of proof or sourcing requirements on intelligence products. Some witnesses believed that the CCJ2 leadership presented a skewed view of what the intelligence showed. However, we did not find sufficient evidence to conclude that the CCJ2 or its leaders changed intelligence to make it factually untrue. Nor did they present, or allowed to be presented, any intelligence assessments that they did not believe were accurate.

B. Alleged Distortion of Intelligence

The complainants and other witnesses also alleged that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders distorted analysts' intelligence assessments. We discuss these allegations and the evidence relating to them in several sections in the classified report, and then provide our overall conclusions regarding the allegations of distortion.

In this unclassified report, we cannot provide the classified details regarding the allegations or the testimony of most witnesses. However, we describe the allegations in general terms, and then we provide our overall conclusions regarding the allegations, which are not classified.

The precise nature of the allegations regarding distortion varied, but one aspect of these allegations was that the editing imposed a "narrative" that the ISF was performing well while ISIL was struggling. An additional variation of this allegation was that senior leaders required a higher "burden of proof" or more sourcing when the analysts produced reports indicating that the ISF was not performing well or that ISIL was struggling.

Specifically, some witnesses asserted that additional sourcing was required for what they described as "bad news" (ISF failure or ISIL success), while additional sourcing was not required to report "good news" (ISF success or ISIL failure). Other witnesses asserted that when "good news" was presented, the products went through the editing process quickly with little questioning or requirement for additional sources. Conversely, when "bad news" was presented in intelligence products, the analysts were questioned closely, required to provide additional sources, or forced to meet a much higher burden of proof for the intelligence to be included in the final products.

Other witnesses denied these assertions. With regard to the use of the term "narrative," they said the term was used within USCENTCOM to describe a "running assessment" of a specific analytical issue. MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman told us they used the term "narrative" to describe a matured, intelligence analytic line built on multiple, corroborated sources that indicated how intelligence assessments were trending with respect to a specific event or region. Other witnesses told us the term "narrative" was used to describe a concept of "continue the story line" when writing intelligence assessments so the reader could understand the issue in a coherent, consistent manner rather than have the analysis change dramatically from day to day without sufficient explanation. They told us this "story line" was developed based upon credible sources sustained over time. They said that, with regard to the assertion that there was a higher burden of proof for "bad news" to be included or a requirement for additional sourcing, the "burden of proof" was equal for both "good news" and "bad news."

In this section in the classified version of this report, we provide witness statements and documentary evidence regarding the alleged imposed narrative, higher burden of proof, or requirements for additional sourcing. While we do not present all the views and testimony of every witness we interviewed in this investigation, in the classified version we present excerpts and summaries of the testimony from many key witnesses to demonstrate the differing views regarding the allegation.

Specifically, in the classified version we first present the allegation as described by the original complainants. We then provide testimony from various witnesses who supported the allegations of distortion, in either whole or part. We then present testimony from witnesses who disagreed with the allegations. We then provide the response of the J2 senior leaders and GEN Austin regarding the allegations.

After the testimony and responses, we then examine individual examples that were raised by witnesses as support for the allegations of distortion.

We then discuss the results of our analytic review of a random sample of 140 intelligence products. In that review, we attempted to determine whether the editing of the intelligence products had patterns and whether those editing patterns resulted in a more positive or negative assessment of the ISF and ISIL successes.

Finally, we provide our overall conclusion on the allegations that intelligence reporting was distorted within the CCJ2.

The following are specific allegations that we examine in the classified version of the report. In this unclassified version, we provide unclassified summaries related to each allegation regarding distortion, as well as our conclusions regarding these allegations.

1. Editing of Intelligence Products

Complainant 1 asserted that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders implemented changes in early October 2014 to impose close editing control over the content of intelligence products in an effort to show that the ISF was performing well while ISIL was struggling.

Complainant 1 stated that the “narrative” was not anything specific and there were no “talking points” published that described the narrative. Rather, he asserted that when analysts described things going badly for the ISF or the Iraqi government, they had to mute that information or not talk about it in the intelligence products. Complainant 1 also stated that they could not portray ISIL as being too strong.

Complainant 1 stated that the daily INTSUM was the “narrative product,” which Mr. Rizzio and Mr. Ryckman edited to make more positive. Although Complainant 1 told us that he never heard J2 senior leaders communicate the narrative as he described, and he could not

recall ever witnessing these editing sessions himself, but his analysts did. Complainant 1 stated that the narrative was evident in the collective outcome of 9 months of editing.

Complainant 1 stated he did not know who established the term “narrative” but believed it was MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman. Complainant 1 said they would use the term in a general sense to describe the analytic requirement to continue the current analytic line and not just stop reporting on a current issue. Complainant 1 stated the analytic writing process was similar to that of a newspaper reporter in that there was “a continuous story line” to maintain and “not always start them over from the beginning.” Complainant 1 said, “that’s the valid use of the [term narrative].”

We asked Complainant 1 if he had any documents or emails that would illustrate this narrative. Complainant 1 told us he was unaware of any documents or emails describing the narrative, but “collectively, over hundreds of products” Mr. Ryckman “constantly herded the products in a specific direction, on these narratives.” He stated that he had no samples to provide to us but referred us to other analysts within the JICCEN who he believed could support his allegation.

We also asked Complainant 1 to describe the editing process that he alleged was used to enforce the imposed narrative. Complainant 1 stated:

So, so again the changes [edits] always targeted certain hot button issues and always tried to drive them in a consistent direction.

But I would say this editing always had a very strong presumptive outcome, and it was toward this preferred narrative. And it was clear from individual changes and from stuff that was struck out, it was clear that certain things that there was a certain outcome expected. And, so the editing became the tool to fix, you know, the conclusions of analysts that were inconvenient or unhelpful.

Complainant 1 stated that Mr. Ryckman’s detailed editing role in the review process led analysts to quickly realize what Mr. Ryckman wanted the analyst to write and what they would get in trouble for writing. He told us that it became very clear what Mr. Ryckman’s message was regarding a particular product.

Complainant 1 stated that MG Grove did not provide much written feedback. He told us MG Grove’s feedback came during meetings with analysts and over the telephone where he would provide directive guidance about what to do, what not to do, and what issues caused him irritation. Complainant 1 said he had no personal knowledge of of this directive guidance, but pointed out that his analysts could provide us with examples.

We asked Complainant 1 if he believed the editorial changes were due to differing opinion about analytic conclusions or if he believed the changes were manipulating the intelligence. Complainant 1 told us it was both. He stated that sometimes the edits to analysis were minor, valid, and corrected things that he missed. However, he said he believed other changes were more dramatic, pointing to a certain conclusion or “pre-judgement” made by Mr. Ryckman.

Complainant 2 offered similar testimony to Complainant 1. He stated that it was a “challenge to try and prove” that the J2 senior leadership imposed the narrative that the ISF was performing well and ISIL was struggling. Complainant 2 stated that the most “wordsmithing,” when it came to the ISF, was done by Mr. Ryckman. Complainant 2 told us that any negative connotation of ISF performance was modified – for example, the word “retreat” would be changed to “relocated” in intelligence products when referring to ISF actions. (We address the use of terminology in the next section of this report.)

In the classified report, we provide examples of testimony from key witnesses regarding the allegations that intelligence was distorted. We organized the witnesses by their responses in the following three categories and provide excerpts of testimony from them:

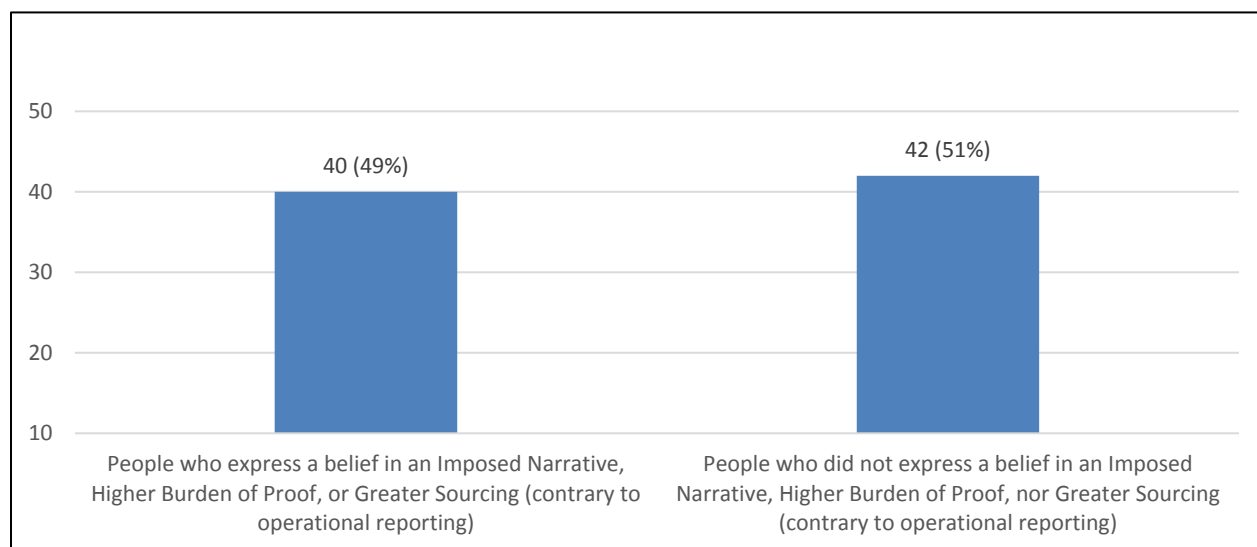
- Witnesses who believed a narrative was imposed on the intelligence process, or believed there was a higher “burden of proof” for bad news versus good news, or believed they were required to provide more sourcing for “bad news versus good news” to be included in the final intelligence products. We note that some witnesses believed that one aspect of this allegation was true – such as a narrative was imposed, but that a higher burden of proof or additional sourcing was not required, or vice versa. However, we kept those witness statements together because those witnesses believed one aspect of the allegations was true.
- Witnesses who did not believe a narrative was imposed on the intelligence process, or there was a higher burden of proof for “bad news versus good news,” or there was a requirement to provide more sourcing for “bad news versus good news.”
- Statements from USCENTCOM senior leaders – GEN Austin, Mr. Rizzio, Mr. Ryckman, and MG Grove – responding to these aspects of the allegation.

It is important to note that some witnesses do not fit neatly into category 1 or category 2. We considered their whole testimony when judging where their testimony fit.

We interviewed 82 USCENTCOM intelligence analysts, including all but one identified by both Complainants, and asked them about the allegations of an imposed narrative, higher burden of proof, or greater sourcing requirement if the assessment was contrary to that of the operational reporting.

Chart VI.B.1.1. illustrates the number and percentage of the 82 analysts who believed in either an imposed narrative, higher burden of proof, or greater sourcing requirement, and those who did not believe any of these.

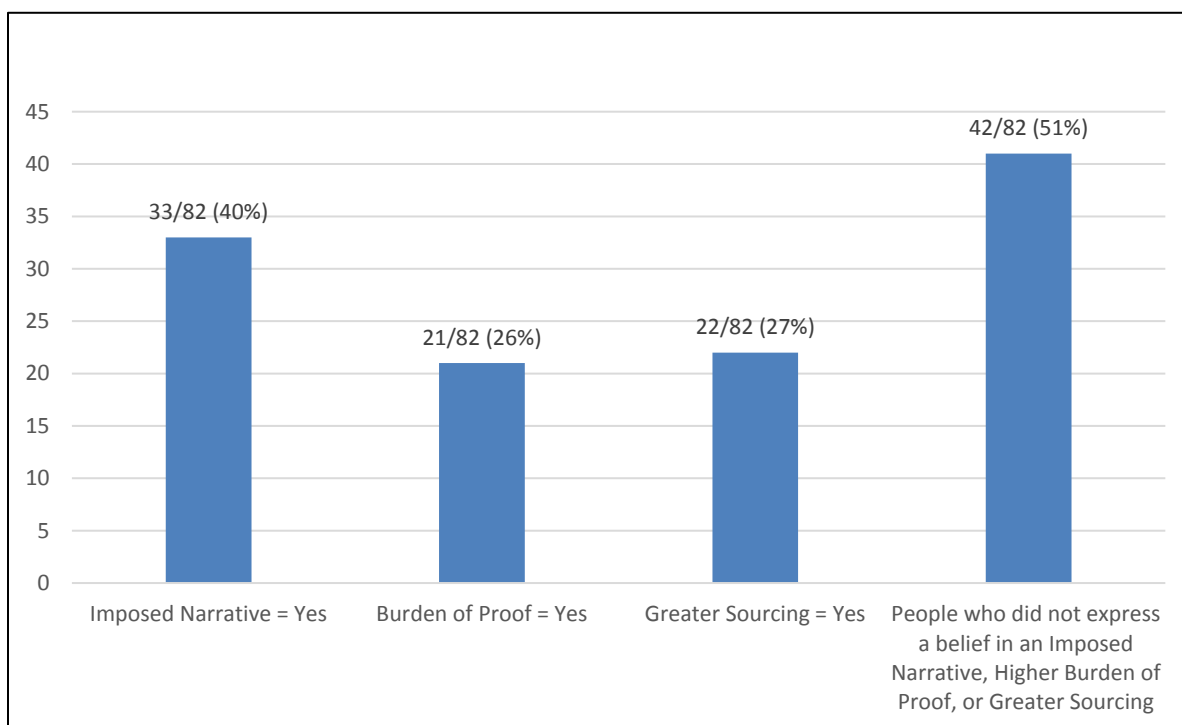
Chart VI.B.1.1. Eighty Two Analysts Who Believed in an Imposed Narrative, Higher Burden of Proof, or Greater Sourcing, and Those Who Believed in None.



Note: Of the 82 witnesses, 34 were not specifically asked the question regarding a higher burden of proof or greater sourcing. Of those 34, 13 believed in an imposed narrative and are included in the left column, and 21 did not express belief in an imposed narrative and are included in the right column with the 21 witnesses who did not express a belief in any of the assertions.

Chart VI.B.1.2. breaks down their testimony further. It illustrates that, of the 82 analysts, 33 (40 percent) believed in an imposed narrative, 21 (26 percent) believed there was a higher burden of proof, and 22 (27 percent) believed in a greater sourcing requirement. The chart also shows the number of those analysts who did not believe in any of these. The three columns on the left (imposed narrative, higher burden of proof, or additional sourcing) add up to more than 40 because some witnesses expressed a belief in more than one of those assertions.

Chart VI.B.1.2. Analysts Who Believed in Either an Imposed Narrative, a Higher Burden of Proof, a Greater Sourcing, or in None of These.



Note: Of the 82 witnesses, 34 were not specifically asked the question of higher burden of proof or greater sourcing. Of those 34, 13 believed in an imposed narrative and are included in the “Imposed Narrative=Yes” column and 21 did not express belief in an imposed narrative and are included in the far right column with the 21 witnesses who did not express a belief in any of the assertions.

Testimony from GEN Austin, Mr. Rizzio, Mr. Ryckman, and MG Grove

GEN Austin, U.S. Army, Commander, USCENTCOM

We asked GEN Austin about the allegation that CCJ2 senior leaders falsified, distorted, delayed, or suppressed intelligence assessments. GEN Austin told us that he had no knowledge of any type of activity to support the allegation. He said that he served three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan and that he understood the serious nature of the allegation. He added that he routinely emphasized to his subordinates that he expects their “unvarnished input.” He further said that he had no “knowledge of anybody trying to downplay or rosy up intelligence.”

GEN Austin also stated that he receives intelligence information from a wide variety of sources, including his subordinate commanders, and other Intelligence Community representatives on his staff who have direct access to him. He added that there is no such thing as

“perfect information” that supports the “goodness of having multiple inputs from various sources.”

We asked GEN Austin how he compared the CCJ2’s intelligence assessments to the other “various sources” of intelligence he receives. He said that across the board, the Intelligence Community is fairly consistent and that he was certain that if we compared products between the CCJ2 and other various sources, we would “see some of that consistency.” He added “they disagree with each other” at times, and “that’s the way it’s supposed to be.” He said that he had not noticed any CCJ2 assessments that were outside the norm of other organizations. He added that the Intelligence Community “writ large is fairly consistent,” and he did not see products from MG Grove “out of line” with other Intelligence Community reporting. He said he does not compare one report with another, rather he looked for “how much information I can get.”

GEN Austin denied the assertion that USCENTCOM intelligence assessments were softened in tone and presented a more positive portrayal of the counter-ISIL campaign than what the intelligence actually warranted. He added that it is important to have accurate information for “commanders on the ground ... so rosyng up [information] doesn’t help us be successful in this fight.”

GEN Austin told us that it was “ridiculous” and “absolutely not true” that he did not want to hear bad news regarding the anti-ISIL campaign. He told us he gets bad news “24 hours a day, seven days a week.” He added, “I don’t know where that particular comment comes from” because the “vast majority” of USCENTCOM considers him a “pretty even tempered guy and very objective guy.”

GEN Austin told us that he did not ever suggest to MG Grove that there should be a more positive outlook on the anti-ISIL campaign. He added, “Let me confirm 100 percent that I have not done that and I never would do that. Again we’re in a fight to win and so I don’t gain anything by trying to paint a rosy picture here.” He also told us that the CJCS, the Secretary of Defense, NSC, and the President have never directed or implied to him that he should present the anti-ISIL campaign in a more positive light. He added, “I’ve not lost a fight yet and I’ve been fighting it since 2003 and I think you got to be objective about your assessment of what you’re up against if you’re going to win, otherwise you’ll color yourself into a corner.”

Mr. Rizzio

Mr. Rizzio told us he assumed his duties on July 6, 2010, as the Defense Intelligence Senior Level (DISL) with the DIA assigned to USCENTCOM. He stated that his previous supervisor was the JICCENT Commander, but when the JICCENT Commander departed, Mr. Ryckman became his supervisor in October 2014. Mr. Rizzio stated that he was a 26-year Marine Corps retired colonel and had held many levels of senior intelligence positions during that time. He told us that his principal duties at USCENTCOM were to be the senior advisor to the JICCENT Commander and MG Grove regarding analytic issues. He added that he also ensures intelligence tradecraft is properly used within the organization, ensures high-quality products are produced and disseminated, and mentors the workforce to ensure career development.

He told us that he did not recall ever having a “clear discussion” early on in his relationship with MG Grove regarding his (Mr. Rizzio’s) duties. He added that MG Grove did eventually provide iterative guidance to ensure that they produced high quality products that were relevant, adequately sourced, and used clear logic. Mr. Rizzio told us the “customer” for JIC products was MG Grove, with the “end state” customer being GEN Austin, his staff, and subordinate units. Mr. Rizzio also told us the secondary JICCENT customers “were anybody that can access our products, and so the products are pushed out on a daily push to a large customer list.

Mr. Rizzio described the operating environment in the JIC in the summer 2014 as a “crisis environment.” He said at that time the JIC was experiencing problematic issues related to other countries and “an extremely complex [ISIL] problem.” He added that during this time the workforce had been in a “surge footing” to man the newly developed IFC and the resulting shift in resources.

Mr. Rizzio stated that the assertion that he and the J2 senior leadership imposed a “narrative” on the intelligence analysis was not true. He also stated the assertion that they created a “rosiness” in USCENTCOM OIR intelligence assessments was also not true. Mr. Rizzio said that a review of the USCENTCOM OIR intelligence products would establish that their reporting was as objective and balanced as could be provided in a time constrained environment, given the sources that were available, and given the management style of MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman.

Mr. Rizzio characterized MG Grove’s and Mr. Ryckman’s management style as risk averse and in control of the process; he also described them as perfectionists. However, Mr. Rizzio denied the assertion that the editing process distorted intelligence and resulted in a “false narrative.”

Mr. Rizzio stated that the DIA and Mr. Ryckman used the term “narrative” to refer to an intelligence analytic line that told a chronology of events or “storyline.” Mr. Rizzio said he “didn’t think that was the right term, because of how that term, the connotation you get from that term from the Information Operations sphere.” He told us he preferred the term “analytic line” rather than “narrative,” and he stated that “there is confusion over the terminology.” Mr. Rizzio added that the intent of the process was to establish the analytic line based upon requisite evidence to support movement of that line of reporting, and follow the line of reporting through until its eventual conclusion.

Mr. Rizzio stated the intelligence analysis review process associated with the OIR products went through the same DIA tradecraft rigor as the traditional process. He stated the review process consisted of multiple levels of review, with each level reviewing specific items.

Mr. Rizzio stated that he concurred with the belief of some analysts that they were put in a difficult situation of reporting on the ISF, because USCENTCOM had the mission of training the ISF.

Mr. Rizzio stated that the JICCENT tried to use military doctrinal terminology that was familiar to USCENTCOM field units. He said that this was challenging, as often the analysts were dealing with reporting that was inconsistent, incomplete, ambiguous, and needed to be synthesized into an accurate report. Mr. Rizzio stated that this problem was exacerbated by the fact that many of the analysts were civilians who were not familiar with military doctrinal terminology. Mr. Rizzio said that he stressed to his analysts that their reports should be written primarily to an operator audience, and the analysts should “use the same terminology that they’re familiar with.”

Mr. Rizzio stated that he, Mr. Ryckman, and the analysts were constantly trying to determine how best to characterize the intelligence information. He stated that Mr. Ryckman, being a perfectionist, “would often spend very tedious amounts of time challenging myself and the analysts” over the correct terminology. Mr. Rizzio added that he understood the frustration this caused among the workforce, but the intent was to provide customers with the best possible assessment, based on a dynamic operating environment.

Mr. Rizzio stated that “fun facts” might be an item that was in the news or of interest to an analyst but was not relevant to a four-star commander. Mr. Rizzio told us that he did “not recall” ever saying “we can’t tell the boss bad news.”

Mr. Rizzio stated that he disagreed with the allegation that J2 senior leaders imposed a higher burden of proof on information that the ISF was performing well while ISIL was struggling. He added that if their reporting for the past 18 months was reviewed, it would show objective and “a lot of negative” reporting. He added that a higher burden of proof often

depended on the topic and not whether the subject was the ISF or ISIL. He said that, depending on the nature of the event, a lower burden of proof was permissible, and he gave force protection as an example of a topic that may require a lower burden of proof to be reported. Less significant topics, he said, may require a higher burden of proof in order to fully develop the analysis.

Mr. Rizzio told us he disagreed that CCJ2 senior leaders distorted intelligence to inaccurately portray the ISF doing well while ISIL was struggling. He added that we should review “the body of reporting” USCENTCOM produced to determine for ourselves if the intelligence was distorted. He stated, “We did the best we could given the information that we had available, given the requirement from the management to be the, the J2 and the VJ2, to be objective and balanced. And that’s what we attempted to do to the best of our ability.”

Mr. Rizzio said that he could submit “bad news” to GEN Austin. He said “we were constantly sending him up our reports and ... we are talking about ISIL having the advantage.”

Mr. Ryckman

Mr. Ryckman stated that there was no narrative imposed on the USCENTCOM intelligence analysis process and there was no “politicization” of intelligence. Mr. Ryckman denied that he ever stated that he or the analysts could not tell the boss bad news or that they changed any assessment with that rationale. Mr. Ryckman stated that he and the analysts work for GEN Austin, who receives intelligence from a variety of sources. Mr. Ryckman said that he found the products he was receiving were not consistent in their analysis in that they frequently conflicted with information published a few days earlier. Mr. Ryckman stated that if he or the analysts were saying something different today than they said earlier, then they owed it to the customer to explain why it was now different.

Mr. Ryckman stated that he took pride in analytic issues and held himself to the same standards that he held his workforce regarding tradecraft issues. Mr. Ryckman said that he takes these products to senior-level meetings and must be prepared to defend the intelligence assessments with high confidence. Mr. Ryckman stated, “words do matter” in writing intelligence analysis, and analysts need to be consistent with their terminology. Mr. Ryckman told us that any edit he made was done in an effort to accurately describe what we believed was occurring. Mr. Ryckman also stated that his edits were not done to skew the picture of what was actually occurring.

Mr. Ryckman said that the term “narrative” is viewed as a very negative word in the intelligence business, but that term is used. He said he does not use the term “narrative” because he does not want to be misinterpreted.

Mr. Ryckman told us that the intelligence collection capability was very limited when the counter-ISIL campaign began. Mr. Ryckman stated that as the intelligence collection capability

matured, the operational force size increased and became another source of information to produce intelligence. Mr. Ryckman stated:

So, now you hopefully can flush out what you have and it may or may – it may disprove some of the perceptions you have or it may validate them. The real challenge here is as it goes on eventually you get to a point where the overwhelming amount of reporting actually is the operational reporting. So, here’s where, and again tradecraft coordination and standards on tradecraft, if you’re using information from a place you kind of have an obligation to coordinate with that place.

Mr. Ryckman added:

We [CCJ2] don’t do a good job ...of getting things in a debriefing so that it’s serialized reporting and [Information Requirements]. But there’s emails. There’s phone conversations. There’s VTCs. There’s input that comes from theater that the analysts have available if they avail themselves of it. Certainly the J2 and I get those inputs all the time.

Mr. Ryckman told us that he disagreed with the allegation that the editing process resulted in an imposed narrative that described the ISF, with U.S. help, as performing well, while ISIL was struggling. He told us that plenty of documents were published by USCENTCOM that do not support that assertion. One of those documents he identified was the ISIL Assessment Tool. He added that a narrative was “certainly not imposed.”

Regarding terminology, Mr. Ryckman told us that “words do matter.” Mr. Ryckman stated that he never edited a product to portray a more positive assessment of the counter-ISIL campaign – “certainly not from me, never happened,”

Mr. Ryckman described his typical interactions with analysts when reviewing products. He said that his “conversation with the analysts would center around things like, ‘Who’s the initiator of the activity? Whoever the initiator is we need to be able to capture who the initiator is.’ Things like, ‘What’s the right doctrinal term?’”

MG Grove

MG Grove disagreed with the assertion that the intelligence assessments were framed around GEN Austin’s operational views.

MG Grove told us that he could bring GEN Austin “bad news” regarding the counter-ISIL campaign. He stated that GEN Austin received assessments from a wide variety of sources outside of USCENTCOM and fused those inputs into his own commander’s estimate. MG Grove

stated GEN Austin never directed or implied that intelligence assessments should be written so that the overall tone was more positive than warranted.

We asked MG Grove to respond to the assertion by some witnesses that when they wrote what they believed was an accurate analysis, which in their opinion was that ISIL was doing better than the ISF, their analysis was modified during the editing process to reflect the opposite – that the ISF was doing well and ISIL was struggling. MG Grove denied the assertion that analysts were not free to accurately report intelligence. He stated that “other injects” occur throughout the editing process based on the facts as seen through the eyes of other editors. He stated that fusing intelligence inputs into one product is not the same as “changing the narrative” or “articulating words.”

We asked MG Grove to respond to the assertion that the daily editing process softened the tone of ISF tactical failures and distorted intelligence assessments. MG Grove replied he did not use or direct the use of words to soften the tone regarding ISF tactical failures. He added, “I don’t completely get involved in the editing process,” and he could not “really comment in terms of that.”

Regarding the origin of the allegation that he distorted intelligence, MG Grove provided several opinions. He told us that allegation may have originated from “frustration over the fact that an analyst can’t, especially our youngsters, can’t just do intelligence like a blog.” He added that intelligence, unlike a blog, has rules, editing, and higher levels of leadership who have a right to comment on what the analyst writes. He said that another origin for the allegation may be a “lack of feedback.” He said that analysts did not understand why their products were not reaching GEN Austin but were “cut down” and returned for more analysis. He stated, “directed management oversight that may not have been in place before” may have created “some bitterness in the [mid-level] leadership” who are “just unhappy with the organization and loss of power that they perceived in running their organization.”⁶¹

⁶¹ In his response to our preliminary report, MG Grove wrote regarding whether he was a perfectionist, “This is not at all the case and lacks a commonsensical understanding of the subject. I was not looking for perfect intelligence and recognize there is no such thing as perfect intelligence as documented in numerous doctrinal manuals. For completeness of this point, I would state that I was looking for a product that was coming to CCJ2 leadership complete and ready to be approved then disseminated that did not require any additional editing. There are various examples from witnesses [as described in this report] that demonstrate the quality of analyst writing early on was not to standard.”

2. Alleged Banned Words

We also investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders distorted intelligence assessments by banning words in intelligence products in order to convey a more positive portrayal of ISF failures.

Complainant 1 wrote in his complaint that the editing process included the “banning of many words” that would accurately and doctrinally describe ISF behavior. Complainant 1 told us that certain terminology was used in order to convey a positive narrative regarding the progress of the counter-ISIL campaign.

We did not find any written list of “banned words.” Both of the complainants told us there was no actual list of “banned words.” None of the witnesses we interviewed had knowledge of any such list. MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and Mr. Rizzio denied the existence of a “banned word” list.

However, some witnesses told us that certain words would consistently be changed during the editing of products to words that they believed “softened the tone” of poor performance by the ISF.

Other witnesses also told us words were not changed to soften the tone of poor performance by the ISF. Some of these witnesses told us the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders wanted to use military doctrinal terminology to characterize actions by the ISF. Additionally, these witnesses told us the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders wanted to avoid the use of emotional language in the writing of intelligence products.

We asked GEN Austin whether J2 analysts were allowed to use certain terms to describe events – specifically, words that denoted any kind of shortfall or failure on the Iraqi Security Forces part were changed to something that appeared to be more neutral. We gave him examples that were provided to us, such as if an analyst wrote the following:

- “The Iraq Security Forces retreated or fled,” it would be changed to “They relocated or withdrew,” implying the move is orderly and not hasty or chaotic.
- “The ISF were moving slow” would become “The ISF were moving deliberately,” implying the move was orderly and not hasty or chaotic.
- “ISF moving slow” became “deliberate” or “ISF stalled” became “paused.”

GEN Austin told us that he had no knowledge of the assertion and “I don’t have any knowledge of anybody trying to downplay or rosy up intelligence.” He told us that it is “hard to

speculate” if it is appropriate to prohibit the use of certain terms, but that it is appropriate to be accurate.

When we asked GEN Austin if he would have any concerns if he were briefed or read a product that said the ISF retreated or fled, he replied, “no.” He added that he would get “all flavors” of reporting, including talking to the commander on the ground that potentially saw the same event occur and relevant Intelligence Community reporting not originating from within USCENTCOM.

Mr. Rizzio told us that writing intelligence products is an “art and not a science” and that he had to weigh operational reporting with intelligence reporting. He asserted that the allegation that certain words were used to soften the tone regarding ISF tactical failures was a “subjective call.” We asked Mr. Rizzio to comment on words that some analysts stated were used to soften the tone of ISF tactical failures. For instance, we told him that we were told that “retreat” had to be used in place of “relocate” and “fled” had to be used in place of “withdrawal.” Mr. Rizzio said that a civilian analyst may not be familiar with military doctrinal terms and that we should “read through the INTSUMs” and “sample” the “negative and positive portrayals” and then compare products to determine if the changes were made to avoid portraying the ISF as lacking the ability, will, or capacity to operate effectively on the battlefield.⁶²

Mr. Rizzio told us that it “was stressed” to analysts to use terminology that operators are familiar with and that Mr. Ryckman would try to get the analysts to characterize the information based upon what the sources said and in an accurate and objective manner. He also said that Mr. Ryckman was a “perfectionist” and would spend a “tedious amount of time” over terms that he and the analyst used.

Mr. Rizzio stated:

We had to find the right words to best characterize the information to be objective, to characterize the event to be objective based upon our assessment of the situation given the uncertainty that we had at this time. So, as best as we can we were trying to do that. So, some of the comments and concerns I can understand where the analysts were coming from, because it was a very tedious and frustrating process that was going through trying to best characterize the information. But it was done to try to do it so that our readership had the best assessment as to what was going on based upon the incomplete information that we had at the time.

⁶² We conducted an analytical review of a sample of intelligence products. We describe the results of that review in Part VI.B.14.

Mr. Rizzio added that there are classic examples of “retreats in history” that were either “organized or disorganized” and that a “withdrawal can be organized or unorganized.” He said that the workforce was “probably” not trained to use doctrinal terms but were doing the best they could to characterize the reporting. Mr. Rizzio said that he attempted to have the IFC use the Joint Chiefs of Staff publication that addressed doctrinal terms in order to accurately characterize events.

Mr. Ryckman said he has a “pretty high standard on analytic issues” and “got frustrated” because it should not have been necessary for him to review and edit products the analysts produced. He added that the reason he had to review and edit their products was “really about tradecraft. It’s about if we’re going to say something what does it mean? Words matter.” He said that he could provide us only an “uninformed answer” regarding word changes, such as “fled” allegedly became “withdrew” and “retreat” allegedly became “tactical withdrawal.” He said, “I can’t comment on these words because I don’t know how they were used on the reviews,” and told us that he can only comment on the changes he knows he made.

He further asserted that he did not do anything with the intent of creating a perception that words were changed to soften the tone of ISF tactical failures to the point that the assessments distorted the performance of the ISF. He added that without being able to understand where these words were used and what they were describing, “I don’t believe actually that that’s the perception that out there.” He said that if we asked GEN Austin or “any of the staff here” if CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders overstated the successes of the ISF, they would not agree with that assertion. He added that USCENTCOM produced plenty of documents that are “not a rosy picture...”

Mr. Ryckman said that SIAs, SIOs, and the IFC SIOs had the responsibility to review and edit analyst inputs and he had no visibility in that process. As an example, he asserted that the allegation that the word “retreat” was changed to “withdrawal” in some USCENTCOM intelligence products may have occurred at the SIO level and “I wouldn’t know that because I would never have seen the ‘retreat.’” He said that if there were analysts who were not getting his feedback, “then we’ve got to work on that [and] I would hope that the SIAs and SIOs didn’t contribute to that confusion ... that obligation is on them too.” He said he has told his SIAs and SIOs that they are responsible for the content of the products their analysts write when those products get to his level. He said that providing feedback to their analysts regarding word changes made by SIAs and SIOs is “not my responsibility. It’s not Mr. Rizzio’s responsibility ... there is a responsibility by the SIAs and SIOs to communicate up and down” regarding products their analysts write.

Mr. Ryckman told us about his previous experience at the DIA when the Director of Intelligence had a “two page list of what he called ‘dirty words,’ and you just weren’t allowed to use them.” Mr. Ryckman said people have certain words and phrases they prefer and his job is to

have an organizational standard so that the words “withdrawal,” or “slow,” for instance, mean the same thing whenever the CCJ2 used the words. He added, “If we said it two or three times one way and we’re going to say it different now, we have to explain why it’s different now, because my assumption is yesterday we actually meant what we said.” He also added, “there would be conversations over ‘deliberate progress’ and ‘slow progress.’ I think if you look up the dictionary you’re not going to find a real big difference between those two words.”

MG Grove told us “There’s a perception out there. I think there’s an opinion out there” but he has “never” stated there was a list of preferred words. He added, “you can review the world two different ways, and I think that was the disconnect. So, there are not preferred terms.”

MG Grove stated that he had never directed the use of any specific terminology and was not aware that any of his analysts were instructed on any specific terminology. MG Grove stated that there was no list of preferred terminology and that he had no knowledge that certain terms were a cause for concern among any analyst until we notified him of our investigation.

We asked MG Grove to respond to the assertion that the daily editing process softened the tone of ISF tactical failures and distorted intelligence assessments. MG Grove replied that he did not use or direct the use of words to soften the tone regarding ISF tactical failures. He added, “I don’t completely get involved in the editing process,” and he could not “really comment in terms of that.”

3. GEN Austin's Use of Term "Narrative"

Several witnesses described three instances in which GEN Austin used the term "narrative." The classified report describes those specific instances and GEN Austin's response.

4. ISIL Attack at the Al Asad Air Base (AAAB)

We investigated the allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders edited a report of ISIL's attack at the AAAB to soften criticism of the ISF. Specifically, Complainant 1 alleged that he wrote an entry for a draft INTSUM regarding an ISIL attack on AAAB, where U.S. personnel were located, and that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders removed from his draft factual details about the attack. Complainant 1 also alleged that although his draft did not characterize ISIL's attack on the AAAB as "successful" or "unsuccessful," a CCJ2 senior intelligence leader inserted the subjective word "unsuccessful" into the INTSUM draft to describe the ISIL attack. According to the allegation, CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders made these edits and insertions so the final INTSUM would portray the ISF more positively.

We found operational reporting detailing this attack within hours of it occurring. This reporting reached USCENTCOM leaders, the Joint Staff, and over 150 addresses. Later that afternoon, an update was sent to over 190 addresses with more information including updated casualty reports and actions taken by the ISF.

5. WATCHCON Change

We also investigated an allegation that Mr. Ryckman refused to change the WATCHCON level for Iraq for about a month during May and June 2014, which allegedly caused a delay in the U.S. Government's time to prepare, act, or mitigate the circumstances in Iraq. We include this allegation in this part of the report because it relates to the allegations that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders downplayed the success of ISIL and the struggles of the ISF.

6. Product Change (INTSUM and First Look)

We investigated an allegation that in October 2014, CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders directed changes in format and length of the Intelligence Summary (INTSUM) product to exert a "significantly greater degree" of "editorial control" to distort intelligence assessments.

7. Coordination Requirements

We investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders restricted analysts' use of coordination as a means to "export [a] false narrative within U.S. Government channels."

In his complaint, Complainant 1 indicated that the USCENCOM standard practice of coordination had been in place for over a decade, and that "the J2 and JIC leaders sought to export the false narrative within U.S. government channels, and often used IC analytic tradecraft as the means to achieve this." Complainant 1 asserted that CCJ2 and JIC leaders suspended all routine coordination of intelligence products by analysts with other intelligence analysts outside USCENCOM, beginning in early October 2014.

Coordination between analysts was not simply a well-established practice, it had great practical utility, and is a fundamental element of IC tradecraft.⁶³ Despite continued questioning of this policy, it remained in place. J2 leaders explicitly and repeatedly forbade direct coordination by analysts; this was a key means of ensuring compliance with the CENTCOM leadership narrative that analysts did not generally agree with.

We interviewed witnesses who told us the revised USCENCOM coordination policy restricted analysts from formally and informally coordinating intelligence products and from collaborating with analysts outside of USCENCOM.

Many other witnesses we interviewed told us the revised USCENCOM coordination policy only restricted analysts from formally coordinating intelligence products but allowed analysts to informally collaborate with analysts outside of USCENCOM.

We found that many JICCENT analysts and even some leaders mistakenly used collaboration and coordination interchangeably in both their emails and in testimony.

⁶³ IAW JP 2-0, "collaboration" is informal information sharing among individuals while document "coordination" is a formal staff process in which official organizational positions are obtained or confirmed.

8. JICCENT Organizational Changes

We investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders reorganized the JICCENT in an effort to give themselves better editorial control over the intelligence effort.

Complainant 1 alleged that after several months of enforcing narrative changes through nightly editing sessions, CCJ2 and JICCENT leaders made changes to the JICCENT in an effort to give themselves better editorial control over the intelligence effort. He told us that three “young and inexperienced” editors were assigned to the IFC to implement editorial guidance and were empowered to “ignore the analytic judgments of senior intelligence analysts with extensive experience on Iraq.”

Complainant 1 further alleged that after the addition of these editors to the IFC, a GG-15 was assigned to the IFC to speak for the J2 and the senior leaders to “enforce a certain narrative that they wanted in products.”

9. ISIL Assessment Tool

We also investigated an allegation that on one occasion CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders adjusted the estimate of ISIL leadership effectiveness in the ISIL Assessment Tool without justification or explanation. The allegation added that “a JIC leader mentioned that the published assessments could eventually be seen by the U.S. Congress – implying that the assessment had to align with policy and should give a false impression to Congress about ISIL strength.” Separately, Complainant 1 alleged that J2 leadership would reverse ISL assessment scores without explanation.

10. J2 Weekly Update

We investigated an allegation that one particular J2 Weekly Update in August 2015 was changed to match the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders’ “preferred narrative.”

11. Briefing by a JICCENT Staff Officer

We investigated an allegation that MG Grove publicly criticized a JICCENT staff officer during and after a briefing about how he briefed the “Effectiveness of Coalition Airstrikes on ISIL” to the senior staff, and that this had a chilling effect on the JICCENT analysts.

12. *Analyst Meetings Raising Concerns About Alleged Distortion of Intelligence and “Cooking the Books”*

During our investigation, we were told about two meetings in which analysts disclosed their concerns to Mr. Rizzio or Mr. Ryckman regarding alleged distortion of intelligence products, or “cooking the books.” The first meeting occurred on October 8, 2014, and the second meeting was held on May 29, 2015. In the classified version of this report, we describe in detail what happened at those two meetings.

13. *Testimony of Witnesses from Outside USCENTCOM*

In the classified version of the report, we provide the perspectives of several senior officials we interviewed from outside the USCENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida, on their view of USCENTCOM’s intelligence products. Those officials – Director James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence; LtGen Vincent R. Stewart, Director, DIA; intelligence officials from other organizations including the Joint Staff and DIA; and CJTF-OIR commanders – told us that they did not conduct a systemic assessment of those intelligence products or compare them to the intelligence products from their organizations or the rest of the Intelligence Community. However, we believe that their perspectives provide insight on whether USCENTCOM’s intelligence products markedly differed in tone or outlook from other intelligence products produced on similar subjects, and we provide their perspectives in the classified version of the report.

14. DoD OIG Sample Intelligence Product Review

Purpose

In addition to our examination of the specific intelligence products related to specific allegations, we conducted an analytical review of a sample of USCENTCOM intelligence products. The overall purpose of this review was to determine whether there were any significant changes related to edits of these products, and whether such changes indicated any trend or pattern of distortion with regard to the portrayal of ISIL and the ISF as stronger or weaker, as alleged by the complainants and some witnesses. This section describes in detail how we conducted that review, and the results of that review.

Methodology

To conduct this review, we examined a stratified random sample of USCENTCOM OIR intelligence products that the CCJ2 produced from May 1, 2014, through September 30, 2015.⁶⁴ This timeframe begins with MG Grove's and Mr. Ryckman's arrival to the CCJ2 and ends with the start of our investigation. This timeframe also includes the time period covered by the allegations.

Based on testimony from the complainants and witnesses regarding which intelligence products were allegedly distorted, we examined in our sample the following four types of USCENTCOM OIR intelligence products discussed previously:

- Intelligence Summary
- First Look
- Commander's Daily Update
- ISIL Assessment Tool

The CCJ2 production group provided us with a list of dates on which each of these four types of products were produced during the timeframe of our analysis. We determined that there were 1,301 instances of any of these four intelligence products being issued from May 1, 2014, to September 30, 2015. These 1,301 products are the total "population" of the four types of published OIR intelligence products that we considered in this review.

⁶⁴ A stratified statistical sample is randomly selected from the population by product types. This ensures that each product type in the population is represented in the sample.

We then selected a statistically random sample of 140 products to review from the population total of 1,301 products. We chose this number of products for our sample because it provides a 90-percent confidence level that our sample reflects all documents published during this time frame.⁶⁵ In an effort to determine whether there were any trends or patterns across all time periods or within specific periods, we designed a statistical sample that was stratified by each product type to ensure that each product type was sufficiently represented to produce a valid statistical sample in each time period. We randomly selected samples from the five time periods that related to significant events regarding the allegations.

Table VI.B.14.1. provides specific information on the total number of the population's products by type within the sampled date range and the number of products in our review's sample.

Table VI.B.14.1. Number of Products by Type in the Population and Sample

Product	Products Published in Population	Sampled Products
INTSUMs	428	43
First Look	412	35
CDUs	423	42
ISIL Assessment Tool	38	20
Total	1301	140

We also analyzed the overall sample for various time periods that were associated with key events related to the allegations in our investigation.

Table VI.B.14.2. provides the time periods utilized in our sample and a brief description of the significant events that took place at roughly the beginning of each time period.

⁶⁵ The confidence level is the probability that over a large number of samples drawn from a given population, 90 percent will include the true population value within their precision, which is often called the margin of error. The technical label for that range is the confidence level.

Table VI.B.14.2. Sampled Time Periods and Associated Events

Time Period	Significant Events at the beginning of each period
May 2014	Mr. Ryckman arrived at USCENTCOM
June–September 2014	MG Grove arrived at USCENTCOM and Mosul falls to ISIL
October 2014–January 2015	Implementation of significant process changes
February 2015–May 2015	Production period after new leaders of the reorganized Near East Division are integrated
June 2015–September 2015	Complaints submitted to OIG

We first searched data files and emails to identify the initial, draft, and final versions of each of the 140 sample products. Based on the number of USCENTCOM intelligence analysts involved in the drafting and review of the intelligence products, we typically found multiple versions of each product. We found 3,442 draft versions of the products in the sample. We then reviewed each of the 3,442 draft versions to identify the initial and final versions for each of the 140 sampled products.

Based on our search and review of the data and emails we obtained from USCENTCOM, we observed occasional, inconsistent, file management and naming conventions throughout USCENTCOM's product review process that created gaps in the records, which limited our ability to recreate the entire history of the editing process. However, we were able to find a sufficient number of versions with which to conduct our review for 137 of the 140 products we randomly selected for our sample. For the other three sample products, we were only able to find the final version (a CDU for Saturday July 19, 2014; a First Look for Sunday, September 7, 2014; and a First Look for Tuesday, October 7, 2014).

We examined and reviewed two different aspects of the sample products to search for indications of distortion through the identification of trends. First, we evaluated the overall tone of the initial and final versions of the intelligence products for information related to ISIL and the ISF. Second, comparing the initial and final product versions, we documented and evaluated every individual edit relating to ISIL and the ISF contained in each of the sample products. For each type of change, we first analyzed the differences between positive and negative changes for each group using a two-sample test between sample results at a confidence factor of 90 percent. The confidence factor, also known as the level of significance, is the parameter at which any difference between two groups is statistically significant and true. A higher confidence level is better. An associated factor is the level of significance, which is the difference between 100 percent and the confidence factor. It is also known as risk, and quantifies the chance of concluding the average positive and negative changes are statistically significant when they are not statistically different (a wrong test result due to randomness during sampling). We discuss the results of each of these two types of analysis in turn.

Overall Tone of Initial and Final Intelligence Products.

First, we compared the overall tone of the initial draft intelligence products with the overall tone of the final products using a consistent definition of positive, neutral, and negative tones.⁶⁶ To make determinations regarding tone, we considered a number of factors, including the use of certain descriptive words and the overall context of the discussions related to both ISIL and the ISF.

We reviewed the initial and final product versions for changes in overall tone between the initial and final versions related to ISIL and the ISF, based upon all the edits that were made in each document. We present one set of results for the overall tone related to ISIL and a second set of results for the overall tone related to the ISF. Within the sample products there were instances in which either ISIL or the ISF were not mentioned in either the initial or final product or, in the case of the three products mentioned above, we were only able to identify the final version of a product. In these instances, we recorded the product as “not mentioned” or “final only” in the initial or final version categories, as appropriate.

Overall Product Tone – ISIL.

Of the 140 sample products, we determined that 14 products changed in overall tone related to ISIL. We determined that 9 products changed the overall tone to a more positive tone

⁶⁶ Specifically, we considered it to be an overall positive tone change for ISF or ISIL when the tone of the overall product changed from negative to neutral, neutral to positive, or negative to positive, or in the other directions for negative tone changes. We did not assess gradations of overall tones change within the the categories of positive, negative, or neutral tones.

for ISIL than the initial version – meaning that ISIL was portrayed as doing better than the product was initially drafted. We also determined that the changes in the other 5 products resulted in a more negative tone for ISIL than the initial version – meaning that ISIL was portrayed as doing worse than the product was initially drafted.⁶⁷.

Table VI.B.14.3. provides the results of our sample review related to the overall tone change for ISIL and for each time period within our sample.

Table VI.B.14.3. Overall Product Tone Change – ISIL Sample Results

	May 2014	June- September 2014	October- January 2015	February- May 2015	June- September 2015	Total
Not Mentioned/ Final Only	0	2	4	4	3	13
No Change	16	20	21	27	29	113
Positive Change ¹	1	5	2	1	0	9
Negative Change ²	0	1	2	1	1	5

¹ The final version of each of these products had a more-positive tone for ISIL than the initial version.

² The final version of each of these products had a more-negative tone for ISIL than the initial version.

⁶⁷ For clarity, this sample product review uses the terms more positive and more negative to describe overall tone changes to the entire document. This will differentiate them from individual tone changes discussed later using terms like ISIL-stronger and ISF-weaker.

As reflected in Table VI.B.14.3., during all time periods in this sample, only 14 of 140 documents changed tone for ISIL between the initial and final versions. Nine of these 14 overall tone changes resulted in a portrayal of ISIL as doing better than depicted in the initial draft product. Based on our statistical analysis, there is a statistically significant difference between more-positive ISIL and more-negative ISIL changes in the population of OIR products published during the entire time period covered by this review.⁶⁸ This means that the greater number of more-positive ISIL overall tone changes, than more-negative ISIL overall tone changes, is not the result of chance. Furthermore, we analyzed each time period. There is not a statistically significant difference between these changes within four of the five time periods. Only the June-September 2014 time period contains statistically significant results that indicate the greater number of more positive changes for ISIL is not the result of chance. During that time period 5 of the 6 overall tone changes resulted in a portrayal of ISIL as doing better than depicted in the initial draft product.

Overall Product Tone – ISF.

Table VI.B.14.4. provides the results of our sample related to the overall tone change for ISF and for each time period within our sample. Of the 140 sample products, we determined that 14 products changed in overall tone of the document related to the ISF. We determined that 8 products changed the overall tone to a more positive tone for the ISF than the initial version – meaning that ISF was portrayed as doing better than the product was initially drafted. We also determined that the changes in the other 6 products resulted in a more negative tone toward the ISF than the initial version – meaning that the ISF was portrayed as doing worse than the product was initially drafted.

Table VI.B.14.4. provides the results of our sample related to the overall tone change for the ISF and for each time period within our sample.

⁶⁸ All statistical analysis performed using a two-sample test between sample results at a confidence factor of 90 percent.

Table VI.B.14.4. Overall Product Tone Change – ISF Sample Results

	May 2014	June- September 2014	October- January 2015	February- May 2015	June- September 2015	Total
Not Mentioned/Final Only	0	7	3	1	0	11
No Change	17	19	21	27	31	115
Positive Change	0	0	4	3	1	8
Negative Change	0	2	1	2	1	6

Based on our statistical analysis, there is no statistically significant difference between more-positive ISF and more-negative ISF changes in the population.⁶⁹ This means that the greater number of more-positive ISF overall tone changes, than more-negative ISF overall tone changes could be the result of chance. Furthermore, we analyzed each time period. There is no statistically significant difference between these changes within any of the five time periods in the population.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ All statistical analysis performed using a two-sample test between sample results at a confidence factor of 90 percent unless otherwise stated.

⁷⁰ Although the raw numbers in the sample of 4 more-positive ISF overall tone changes and 1 more-negative ISF tone change for the October 2014-January 2015 time period appear different, the difference was not statistically significant using a confidence of 90 percent. The difference between the two groups (more-positive and more-negative ISF overall tone changes) in this time period become statistically significant at a lower confidence factor of 36 percent (and a risk, or level of significance of 64 percent). This is calculated based on product type frequency and the frequency of unchanged products in the time period sampled. This means that in this time period, we are 36 percent confident that the average number of positive and negative changes in the population are different and the difference is statistically significant. However, there is a 64-percent risk that this difference is simply due to randomness which occurs during sampling, and that the differences of average changes in the population are not significantly different.

Review of Individual Changes and Individual Tone Changes Within Each Intelligence Product.

In addition to reviewing the overall tone of the changes in the products in the sample, we also reviewed each individual edit within the 137 sample intelligence products where we were able to identify the initial and final versions. In our review, an OIG team, including OIG employees with intelligence experience, reviewed all products to count changes to information on ISIL or ISF operations in Iraq.⁷¹ We did not count corrections to grammar, spelling, tense (such as a change from “has” to “have” to correct verb tense, or other grammatical edits), or formatting of graphics.⁷² We also did not count additional information which only clarified original information, such as spelling out acronyms, further defining a location of an event, or detailing an individual’s affiliation or background. However, we did count deleted information and other changes.⁷³

We then determined for every individual change whether it affected the incremental tone for the ISF, ISIL, or both.⁷⁴ A classified example of an individual change that did not result in a tone change is presented in the classified report at Table VI.B.14.5. (which is not included in this version).

As noted above, of the 140 sample intelligence products, we found initial and final versions for 137 products. Of those 137 products, we found that 70 products had no changes, and 67 products had changes from the initial to the final versions (including both changes with and changes without impact to tone). Of those 67 products, 35 products contained only changes that did not impact tone, and 32 products had edits with individual tone changes.

⁷¹ The allegations asserted that various edits to analysts’ initial draft products changed the tone of the assessment. We focused our review on changes made to the initial draft product and did not count new information added later in the production process, because we could not determine whether the added information related to new intelligence that USCENTCOM received during the time that the intelligence product was being reviewed, or whether the new information reflected a change in the view of existing intelligence contained in the initial draft. We did not count entirely new slides or paragraphs, as these were considered late-breaking or new information (since the initial product was written). Accordingly, in this evaluation we examined changes, deletions and edits to the information in the initial draft, not new intelligence added to the initial draft.

⁷² Formatting of icons or symbols that did not change size, location, or meaning on a graphic was not counted as a change.

⁷³ If a product reflected few separate and distinct changes within a single paragraph, we counted those changes as separate changes. However, when numerous sentences changed in a single paragraph, or when there was an extensive re-write of the paragraph, we counted the entire re-written paragraph as one change.

⁷⁴ We did not count changing the subject-verb-object of a sentence as a tone change, unless it conveyed a different end state from the initial, such as more casualties, territory controlled, or equipment captured. We did not count changes discussing repositioned forces as a tone change, if the overall strength of the group remained constant. However, if additional fighters were recruited or moved from another nation into Iraq, we counted this change as a tone change.

Table VI.B.14.6. Individual Changes, Individual Tone Changes, and Products With No Changes.

	May 2014	June- September 2014	October- January 2015	February- May 2015	June- September 2015	Total
Final only	0	2	1	0	0	3
Products with no changes	1 2	1 7	12	12	1 7	70
Products containing changes*	5	9	16	21	16	67
Total products	17	28	29	33	33	140
Changed products <u>without</u> impact to tone	5	6	6	12	6	35
Changed products impacting tone	0	3	10	9	10	32

*These are detailed in the last two rows of this table.

Next, we separately counted individual changes in each document and recorded any individual tone change as ISIL-stronger, ISIL-weaker, ISF-stronger, or ISF-weaker.⁷⁵ Then, a senior OIG investigator reviewed all results and both versions of the product to confirm the count and direction of individual tone changes. If this senior investigator determined a different result, he and the OIG intelligence evaluator on the OIG investigative team then reviewed both versions to resolve any differences of opinion. This occurred in only 23 of 137 products.

Finally, for all products that had edits that changed the tone, we reviewed all changes and available versions of the product to attempt to determine where in the review process the change happened, and who made the change. In only 9 of 32 instances, we were able to determine at what level the change actually occurred, or who made it.⁷⁶ Moreover, for 31 of 32 products, we

⁷⁵ Use of these categories denotes individual, or incremental tone changes, not a change to the overall document's tone (this review describes those in terms of more positive and more negative).

⁷⁶ We identified who made changes that produced an incremental tone change. Mr. Rizzio made changes for five products, Mr. Ryckman changed two, and either MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman changed another product (we could not determine which leader, but changes occurred after Mr. Rizzio's review). A Near East Division leader changed the ninth product (zero overall tone changes).

were unable to determine from the documents and emails associated with those documents the reason for any individual change.⁷⁷

In those 67 products with changes, we found a total of 223 individual changes. Of those 223 changes, 60 impacted tone and 163 did not impact tone.

Table VI.B.14.7. Individual Changes within Products

	May 2014	Jun- Sept 2014	Oct- Jan 2015	Feb- May 2015	Jun- Sept 2015	Total
Total <u>products</u> with changes	5	9	16	21	1 6	67
Total number of <u>individual</u> changes	8	34	50	73	58	223
Number of <u>individual</u> changes <u>without</u> impact to tone	8	30	31	54	40	163
Number of <u>individual</u> changes impacting tone	0	4	19	19	18	60

We present one table of results of our review for individual ISIL tone changes and a separate table for individual ISF tone changes.

Evaluation of Individual Tone Changes – ISIL.

Of the 32 products with 60 individual tone changes, 45 individual tone changes portrayed ISIL as weaker or as stronger than that portrayed in the initial draft. Table VI.B.14.8. provides the results of this portion of the evaluation.

⁷⁷On the one product where we could determine the rationale for the change (which was an ISF-weaker tone change resulting from removing information on ISF's control of a city), Mr. Ryckman annotated on the draft that the information had been included in previously published products and was no longer current.

Table VI.B.14.8. Individual Tone Changes – ISIL

	May 2014	June- September 2014	October- January 2015	February- May 2015	June- September 2015	Total
Individual changes making ISIL Stronger	0	2	4	6	3	15
Individual changes making ISIL Weaker	0	1	10	7	12	30
Total ISIL Tone Changes	0	3	14	13	15	45

Although the raw numbers in this sample suggest a difference between the greater number of ISIL-weaker tone changes and fewer number of ISIL-stronger tone changes, particularly for two time periods (October 2014 to January 2015 and June to September 2015), the analysis does not show that they are statistically different at the 90-percent confidence level. The difference in ISIL changes would become statistically significant using an 87-percent confidence level for the October 2014 to January 2015 time period. This means that in this time period, we are 87-percent confident that the average number of stronger and weaker changes in the population are different and the difference is statistically significant. However, there is a 13-percent risk that this difference is simply due to randomness which occurs during sampling, and that the differences of average changes in the population are not significantly different.⁷⁸

Regardless of the confidence level used, the greater number of ISIL-weaker tone changes may have contributed to some analysts' perception of distortion.

⁷⁸ For the June to September 2015 time period, the confidence level would need to be lowered to 50 percent for that difference (more ISIL-weaker changes) to be statistically significant. This means that in this time period, we are 50-percent confident that the average number of positive and negative changes in the population are different and the difference is statistically significant. However, there is a 50-percent risk that this difference is simply due to randomness which occurs during sampling, and that the differences of average changes in the population are not significantly different.

In those other three time periods, we saw no pattern of differences, let alone a statistically significant one.

Finally, based on our statistical analysis, there is not a statistically significant difference at the 90-percent confidence level between ISIL-weaker and ISIL-stronger changes in the entire population.

Evaluation of Individual Tone Changes – ISF.

We did not see a trend or pattern in the changes regarding the ISF. Of the 32 products with the 60 individual tone changes, 15 individual tone changes portrayed the ISF as weaker or stronger than that portrayed in the initial draft.

Table VI.B.14.9. provides the results of this portion of the evaluation.

Table VI.B.14.9. Individual Tone Changes – ISF

	May 2014	June- September 2014	October- January 2015	February- May 2015	June- September 2015	Total
Individual changes making ISF Stronger	0	0	2	3	2	7
Individual changes making ISF Weaker	0	1	3	3	1	8
Total ISF Tone Changes	0	1	5	6	3	15

Based on our statistical analysis, there is not a statistically significant difference between ISF-weaker and ISF-stronger changes in the population.⁷⁹ Furthermore, there is not a statistically significant difference between these changes in any of the five time periods. This indicates any difference between ISF-stronger and ISF-weaker changes could have occurred by chance.

⁷⁹ All statistical analysis performed using a two-sample test between sample results at a confidence factor of 90 percent unless otherwise stated.

Conclusions Regarding Alleged Distortion of Intelligence

In this section, we provide our overall conclusions on whether CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders distorted intelligence products to portray counter-ISIL operations in a rosier light, or to show that the ISF was stronger and ISIL weaker than the intelligence warranted.

In our investigation, we found a strong perception among many intelligence analysts who worked on USCENTCOM Operation INHERENT RESOLVE intelligence products that CCJ2 leaders were attempting to distort the intelligence products, either through excessive editing, imposition of a narrative, requiring a higher burden of proof for “bad news,” or demanding additional sourcing requirements if the intelligence indicated that ISIL was doing well or ISF was struggling. That widespread perception alone indicated a significant problem, which leaders failed to adequately address in a timely way.

However, when we analyzed the full scope of the testimony, both by USCENTCOM analysts and leaders and by other intelligence officials outside USCENTCOM; reviewed the examples provided by the complainants and the witnesses; searched over 17 million documents and files; and conducted our own analytic assessment of a sample of intelligence products, we did not find that anyone intentionally attempted to distort intelligence. Nor did we find a systematic distortion of intelligence.

We did find, based primarily on our analytical sample, the testimony of some members of the Intelligence Community, and the testimony of some analysts, some basis for the analysts’ perception of distortion.

Moreover, we believe that MG Grove was cautious, preferred high confidence intelligence products, and greatly valued the input of the operators on the ground, which sometimes led to intelligence that was unconfirmed by operators not being included in intelligence products with any appropriate caveats. We also believe that the analysts’ perceptions of distortion led some of them to “self-censor” their products and, therefore, some did not try to submit intelligence assessments that they believed conflicted with their perception of their leaders’ narrative.

To be clear, we did not find systematic or intentional distortion of intelligence by CCJ2 leaders, as the complainants and some witnesses alleged. We also did not conclude that anyone committed misconduct. It is also important to note, as discussed in the command climate section of this report (Part VI.E.7), that the processes and perceptions among analysts have improved since 2014, when MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived, OIR started, and the crisis intelligence production began. However, we believe that the communication, guidance, and intelligence processes within USCENTCOM related to OIR intelligence products could, and should, have been better. We also believe that additional improvements can be made and codified, and we provide 28 recommendations for management improvements, as well as one accountability recommendation in Part VII, Examination of Management Processes, of this report.

The following sections describe in more detail the reasons we reached these conclusions.

Perception of Distortion

With regard to the perception of distortion of intelligence within the CCJ2, it was troubling to find that many analysts believed their leaders distorted intelligence or imposed a narrative on their intelligence products. Almost half of the intelligence analysts that we interviewed in the JICCENT and who provided an opinion on this question believed that intelligence was being skewed in some way, either by imposing a narrative, requiring a higher burden of proof if the intelligence provided bad news, or requiring additional sourcing.

These numbers were also consistent with the Analytic Objectivity and Process Survey that the ODNI conducted in 2015. As we discuss in the section of this report about the command climate (Part VI.E.7), 45 of the 119 (38 percent) of the USCENTCOM analysts or managers who responded to that survey believed someone had attempted to distort or suppress analysis in the face of persuasive evidence.

Our investigation identified multiple causes for this widespread perception of distortion and the lack of trust in the CCJ2 leadership among analysts who worked on OIR products. First, the operational tempo of intelligence production was high, and stressful, even before MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman assumed their leadership positions in 2014. The pace was fast, the workload was unrelenting, and the diversity of important intelligence matters within USCENTCOM's area of responsibility was vast. As a result, the workforce's morale was low when MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived. Soon thereafter, the pace increased as the crisis production began with the onset of the counter-ISIL campaign, Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, and intelligence products were modified to create more tactically oriented products on an around-the-clock basis.

Also contributing to the tension was the atypical requirement for the CCJ2 to report not simply on ISIL's operations, but also on the operations of friendly forces – the ISF. Reporting on friendly forces is typically provided by J3 operators, with significant input from the commanders and troops who are working with the friendly forces on the ground. In Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, USCENTCOM had drastically fewer troops on the ground than during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM from 2003 to 2011, and the corresponding intelligence collection capability was likewise significantly reduced. Moreover, the CCJ2's responsibility for reporting on the ISF often required the CCJ2 to make assessments that related to the success of the USCENTCOM commanders and troops who were training, advising, and assisting the ISF in the counter-ISIL campaign. Resolving the intelligence inputs and the inputs of operators on the ground was sensitive and at times led to friction with the operational commanders. MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman believed that operator inputs were critical for the analysts' intelligence products. But, this created a difficult dynamic when the operations side of USCENTCOM had divergent views from the intelligence analysts regarding what was happening on the ground.

MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman's guidance on this issue was unclear, and it appeared to the analysts that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman overvalued and relied too heavily on the operators' views. For example, one JICCENT division leader commented that "there's only so many times that you're going to get lit up by a three-star before you start saying, 'Okay, maybe we just need to re-approach how we're saying it, so that we're still getting the facts across without being inflammatory.'" In editing one intelligence slide regarding the disposition of an ISF unit, Mr. Ryckman wrote that the analyst should "NEVER include a comment on these types of ISF actions without confirmation from [forward headquarters]." He later modified that instruction to "We should VERY SELDOM have a slide on ISF that is unconfirmed." Many in the workforce perceived this approach as undervaluing their analysis of intelligence and allowing it to be trumped by operator input, even when the intelligence contradicted the operator input. Yet, the CCJ2 never clearly explained or documented the way to balance and assess operator input for the workforce, which exacerbated the perception that intelligence was being distorted.

In addition, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman's management style differed significantly from prior CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders. During the counter-ISIL campaign, which the prior CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders did not have to contend with, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman were much more involved in the editing and review process, which was their prerogative. They often believed that the products were not well written, fully explained, adequately supported, or inclusive of all inputs, including the operators' perspectives. Their scrutiny created further friction with the analytical workforce and likely contributed to the perception of an imposed narrative.

Moreover, MG Grove's management style was described as intense, abrasive, and cautious. He strove for perfection and was inclined to require "high confidence" intelligence

assessments. He was risk-averse and had high standards – even stating at one point, according to one witness, that intelligence products should be “perfect and on time.” That is a standard that seemed difficult if not impossible to meet, particularly given the uncertain nature of intelligence and the time constraints on the products that needed to be provided.

On the other hand, other witnesses had positive views of MG Grove’s management style. For example, other witnesses described him as approachable – asking fair questions, and not dictatorial.

Mr. Ryckman also was rigorous in his scrutiny of intelligence products, often going over the products multiple times and examining in detail the language that was used in the intelligence products. This, too, was a change for the analysts.

Three months after MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived, the format of some of the intelligence products that the USCENTCOM Commander used was modified. For example, previously, the daily intelligence summary (INTSUM) was lengthy, 10 to 15 pages long, and included many details. GEN Austin wanted a more concise product that summarized relevant events and provided context. This change meant that the analysts, whose work had not previously been scrutinized, now had to develop their analysis and inputs differently. They had to be more succinct, provide more context, and summarize the details differently. This created concerns and caused friction with the workforce, whose products were edited, condensed, and changed. One complainant cited this level of control and editing as evidence the CCJ2 leadership was imposing a narrative on the intelligence process.

Coupled with these changes and differing requirements, we found a notable lack of communication from leaders at multiple levels explaining the changes, providing guidance on what they sought, giving feedback on the edits they were making, or communicating their expectations to the analytical workforce. We believe this failure was a significant cause of the analysts’ belief in distortion, and a significant reason that allegations were made.

For example, we heard that the CCJ2 leadership desired the analysts to use terminology that was less “emotional,” more consistent with military doctrine, and more understandable to the USCENTCOM Commander, who was the primary user of their intelligence, as well as to other USCENTCOM recipients. As a result of these preferences, according to several witnesses, the intelligence products were often edited to use military doctrinal terms. Yet, we found little guidance on this issue from the CCJ2 leadership. As a result, some analysts, especially newer hires and those without military experience, did not know what terms should be used and why. Instead they saw their products being changed, they thought the changes softened their language unnecessarily, and they did not understand the rationale for the changes.

Similarly, we found that the CCJ2 leaders and editors often did not provide feedback on the reasons for the edits and changes they made to the analysts' products. The edits were often made at night, or in the early morning, when the analysts who initially drafted the products were no longer on shift and available to discuss their products and the edits. They often had little input in the discussion surrounding these changes. Instead, they often saw the final products when they were published and, even afterwards, they seldom received clear and consistent feedback on the rationale for changes. Subordinate managers inside the JICCENT also contributed to this feedback problem, which we discuss further in the command climate and management processes parts of this report (Parts VI.E.7. and VII.).

We believe other factors in causing the widespread perception of distortion among the analysts who worked on OIR products were several key incidents that became widely known and discussed. One such incident concerned a JICCENT staff officer discussing a slide in a large meeting that had not previously been briefed to the J2 or USCENTCOM leaders before it was disseminated outside USCENTCOM. The chronology of events, as discussed in a previous section, shows that the changed slides went outside USCENTCOM to the CJCS before being briefed to GEN Austin or MG Grove. GEN Austin discovered this and criticized MG Grove – not because the content was too negative, but because it differed from the message that MG Grove had briefed to a recent congressional delegation. During a subsequent briefing, MG Grove expressed his displeasure with the JICCENT staff officer in front of a large audience and then again in MG Grove's office after the briefing. That criticism contributed to a chilled atmosphere among some of the workforce. We are not suggesting that the USCENTCOM leaders' criticism was unfair or unfounded. However, the criticism became widely known and discussed, and it was interpreted by some analysts as the leadership coming down hard on someone for allegedly providing a positive picture of ISIL's efforts, rather than as legitimate criticism for not informing the leadership before a changed analytical conclusion was sent outside USCENTCOM. This further contributed to the strained atmosphere and the lack of trust between many analysts and the CCJ2 leaders.

Just after the incident with the JICCENT staff officer, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman changed the CCJ2 policy on coordination of intelligence policies, that is, requiring MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman to be consulted before analysts provided the official USCENTCOM position on intelligence products created by intelligence components outside USCENTCOM. Coordination is different from collaboration, which involves informal exchanges and discussions among intelligence analysts about their assessments and products. However, the message to the workforce was unclear and many analysts believe that both coordination and collaboration was being prohibited even though collaboration was not intended to be limited. Even when we interviewed analysts and the CCJ2 leaders during this investigation, some incorrectly used the terms coordination and collaboration interchangeably. This lack of clarity further reduced trust

between analysts and their leaders, and contributed to the perception that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders were trying to control the “narrative” regarding the counter-ISIL campaign.

We also believe that the use of term “narrative” by USCENTCOM leaders was not carefully or adequately explained to the workforce. For example, GEN Austin used that term several times, including at a conference where he allegedly said “One important thing though is that we have to manage the narrative” regarding the counter-ISIL campaign. On another occasion he was reported to have stated that overall, USCENTCOM is missing a “narrative up [the] chain of command and out to [the] Government,” that “we need to get the right story out,” and that “the intelligence summary should become the USCENTCOM daily story.”

GEN Austin’s explanation to us for his use of the term narrative – in essence that he wanted a narrative advanced rather than “graphics” – did not clarify what he meant. We believe his use of the term contributed to the belief among certain analysts that a preferred narrative was being imposed on them and was affecting their intelligence products. We do not believe GEN Austin meant to imply that. He told us, and others confirmed, that he was open to “bad news,” that negative assessments were often provided to him, and that he valued accurate assessments, not assessments of one kind or another. However, the use of the term “narrative” by him and others contributed to a perception among some analysts that he was seeking to shape intelligence products from USCENTCOM.

Other CCJ2 leaders used the term “narrative” without clear explanation and guidance on what they meant. We recognize that there is a legitimate use of the term – to ensure that there is a running assessment or analytical line through intelligence products so that issues that are discussed one day are not dropped from discussions in subsequent days, or that an assessment does not abruptly change without adequate explanation for the change. However, this term was not clearly and consistently explained across the CCJ2 workforce. Some perceived its use to mean that the CCJ2 leadership had a preferred story to present, regardless of the evidence, and when analysts’ work did not match that story, their products would be arbitrarily changed. Again, that perception was not clearly addressed, and the legitimate use of the term narrative was not clearly explained.

Overall, we were also struck by the inadequate efforts, especially during the first 6 months of the counter-ISIL campaign, and continuing until the allegations of distortion became public and the initiation of this investigation, by CCJ2 senior leaders to communicate with the workforce and to address the serious concerns among intelligence analysts about distortion of their products. We determined that this complaint of distortion was raised during at least two meetings with CCJ2 leaders. In the first meeting, in October 2014, analysts shared concerns about CCJ2 leaders reviewing products and that they could only present “good news.” Mr. Ryckman denied this was the case and, according to Complainant 1, stated that the analysts were not presenting the facts to support their analysis. Several witnesses said that a meeting attendee raised a blunt allegation to

Mr. Rizzio following Mr. Ryckman's departure from the meeting that some analysts believed the CCJ2 leaders were "cooking the books." The witnesses said that they recalled that Mr. Rizzio talked, after Mr. Ryckman departed the meeting, about analysts needing to be "on board."

In another meeting with analysts, in May 2015, Mr. Rizzio discussed the analysts' concern that senior leaders were "cooking the intel books." Mr. Rizzio said to us that he told the analysts at the meeting that MG Grove had a high standard, that "you have to bring the evidence." Mr. Rizzio also informed us that before the meeting he told MG Grove that "this is the worst command climate I've seen in this organization since I've been involved with it, and they think you two [MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman] are cooking the books." He added "and MG Grove was stunned." However, MG Grove told us that he did not remember this conversation.

Additionally, the JICCEN Commander told us that he informed MG Grove 8 or 10 times that analysts perceived there was an imposed narrative on the intelligence process. MG Grove told us that he recalled only a single instance when the JICCEN Commander informed him of analysts' concerns.

A USCENTCOM analyst told us that, in a meeting that occurred sometime between December 2014 and January 2015, Mr. Ryckman asked if he thought "we were cooking the books," meaning intentionally changing the intelligence assessments to convey something else. The analyst stated that he told Mr. Ryckman that he did not believe anyone was deliberately altering intelligence. However, he also told Mr. Ryckman that the analysts were being held to a higher standard to tell a narrative contradictory to what the forward commanders were saying. Mr. Ryckman told us that he did not recall this meeting but said he had no reason to doubt the analyst's assertion.

MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not fully grasp the extent of the belief among some analysts about distortion and their concerns. In our interviews, they stated that they wished the analysts had raised the matter directly with them. We believe that leaders and analysts did raise it. We also believe that both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman should have been aware of the growing concern among intelligence analysts that their intelligence products were being distorted, and they should have fully and directly addressed the problem.

In conclusion, we believe that their efforts prior to this investigation to communicate more fully with the workforce working on OIR products, to provide better guidance, to provide more feedback on changes, and to address the strong and persistent perception of distortion were significantly lacking.

Actual Distortion

We believe that the evidence did not substantiate that the CCJ2 leaders intended to distort intelligence products or that their changes to intelligence products resulted in a false narrative or systematic distortion of intelligence, as alleged by the complainants and some witnesses.

We did find that MG Grove valued the commanders' and operators' input, and that he sometimes hesitated to provide intelligence that was not "high confidence" when it was uncorroborated by the operators in Iraq. He was also more skeptical of certain kinds of intelligence, which led to tension with his intelligence analysts. In addition, the testimony of some witnesses from the Intelligence Community was that USCENTCOM intelligence products were generally more positive about the impact of the ISF and its effect on ISIL than their own assessments. However, they did not believe that USCENTCOM intelligence products were systematically or intentionally distorted, nor did we find such distortion. We reached that conclusion for several reasons, which we discuss in turn.

Specific Examples of Alleged Distortion

First, with regard to the specific examples of distortion to which the complainants and other witnesses pointed, we do not find that they demonstrated any systematic or intentional distortion of intelligence.

For example, some witnesses stated that the editing process included the "banning of many words" that accurately described the intelligence. They alleged that certain terminology was used in order to convey a more positive narrative regarding the progress of the counter-ISIL campaign. Some witnesses told us that certain words would consistently be changed during the editing process to words that they believed "softened the tone" of poor performance by the ISF.

However, other witnesses told us that words were not changed to soften the tone of poor performance by the ISF. They said that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders wanted to use terminology consistent with military doctrine to characterize the ISF's actions, that they wanted to avoid the use of emotional language in intelligence products, and that they wanted to use terminology that the commander and operators understand.

We found no written list of banned words. We also found that some of the allegedly banned words were included in final intelligence products.

We did find some examples of what the witnesses were referring to. For example, some witnesses referred to an instance in which the word "flee" was deleted when describing an event in which the ISF allegedly dropped their weapons and ran. We found an example of the word "flee" being changed to "leave." Similarly, we found an example of an initial product stating that

“the ISF had lost control of [a specific city]” being changed in the final product to state that “the ISF ceded the severely damaged city center and repositioned troops in nearby neighborhoods.”

We also found an example of changing the words “slow progress” to “deliberate progress” when describing the ISF’s actions, and we found that the term “rout,” when describing the ISF, was changed. These few examples became known and widely discussed, and we believe they contributed to the belief that certain words were removed from products to distort the meaning. However, we did not uncover, nor did witnesses provide, any examples of editing that distorted a product’s overall assessment or that altered the facts being presented.

With regard to other examples of alleged distortion, one of the complainants alleged that the INTSUM reporting on an ISIL attack on Al Assad Air base was distorted. The complaint was that the INTSUM was changed to only provide a brief overview of the attack rather than a full factual rendition of what had occurred, and that the final INSTUM characterized the ISIL attack as unsuccessful when in fact ISIL insurgents had breached the perimeter of the base before being killed. We do not consider this change as distortion. The INTSUM was modified to present a shorter, executive-level summary of key events, rather than a full description of all the facts, which had been previously reported to the Commander and others through different intelligence products and emails. Moreover, whether the attacks should be ultimately characterized as successful or unsuccessful was a matter of judgment. We agree that an overall adjective describing it as successful – or unsuccessful – was not as informative as a factual description of what occurred and could be disputed. However, we do not see this product as distorted intelligence, particularly given that the complete set of facts was reported in other communications and understood throughout USCENTCOM.

Another alleged example of distortion was the CCJ2 leadership’s decision not to change the WATCHCON level in May 2014, as several analysts recommended, and that Mosul fell in June 2014 before the WATCHCON was eventually changed, after MG Grove’s arrival. We do not believe that this provides evidence of an intent to distort intelligence or present a rosier intelligence picture. The decision not to change the WATCHCON, but to continue to assess the environment, was a reasonable, good-faith decision by CCJ2 leadership at the time, and does not indicate any intent to present a rosier picture of the fight against ISIL. However, the CCJ2 leadership’s decision not to raise the WATCHCON level when analysts recommended it be changed, but instead to raise it after the fall of Mosul, contributed to the early perception that the leadership did not trust the analysts and wanted to control the “narrative.”

Similarly, the allegation that changes to the format of intelligence products were implemented to ensure that a narrative was imposed on the analysts also was not supported. When we interviewed the CCJ2 leaders, and others, about their reasons for the changes – such as the reason to reduce the size of the INTSUM and turn it into a more summarized, executive-level product – the decision seemed to be a reasonable management decision. As noted previously, however, while the change appeared to be reasonable, CCJ2 leadership provided inadequate explanation and communication to the workforce about the rationale for the change, which contributed to the perception that the changes were being imposed to enforce a narrative that ISIL was weak and the ISF was strong, that good news sailed through into intelligence products, and that bad news was closely questioned.

As previously noted, MG Grove changed how coordination and collaboration among analysts occurred, but that change was not explained clearly. There is a distinction between collaboration (discussions among analysts about intelligence products), which was still permitted, and coordination (USCENTCOM's official concurrence to an intelligence product), which was restricted. In our view, it was not unreasonable for CCJ2 leadership to want to ensure that the official position of USCENTCOM on intelligence products was reviewed by leadership. On the other hand, it would have been unreasonable and counter to effective intelligence practices to restrict collaboration between analysts. After our interviews, we found that CCJ2 leadership did not intend to restrict collaboration. However, CCJ2 leaders at various levels did not clearly articulate this policy change, either orally or in writing, which resulted in widespread confusion about whether collaboration was still permitted.

We also did not find any evidence that the JICCENT reorganizations, such as activating the Intelligence Fusion Center, assigning several editors to work on intelligence products, or assigning GG-15s to the reorganized Near East Division in the JICCENT, were designed for any improper purpose. Rather, they were legitimate management decisions to address the crisis production and to improve the quality of the intelligence products. The changes did impose more oversight, review, and editing of CCJ2 intelligence products, which many analysts did not like. This was a change for the analysts, whose work in the past underwent less scrutiny and editing. Some witnesses told us that the editing and scrutiny was necessary and productive. Others thought it was unnecessary and did not improve the products. However, these changes appeared to be justifiable management actions, intended to improve products in a crisis environment. Once again, the rationale for these changes were not adequately communicated to the workforce.

We also did not find that the ISIL assessment tool was changed inappropriately. One witness asserted that at one meeting, the JICCENT Commander commented that the assessment could eventually be seen by the U.S. Congress, which implied that the assessment should give a false impression to Congress about ISIL strength. The witness specifically asserted that the JICCENT Commander stated, "Congress will see this ... and it's counter to what General Austin

has testified.” However, other witnesses did not remember the comment this way, indicating that they heard the Commander as simply saying Congress will see this and we need to get this right. The JICCENT Commander denied he would ever provide any false assessment, and we saw no evidence that he did. In addition, we found that this particular assessment tool was not even changed as a result of the meeting.

With regard to CCJ2 senior leadership’s involvement in the ISIL assessment tool in general, the witness who reported the discussion with the JICCENT Commander also stated that her experience in the meetings with MG Grove regarding the ISIL assessment tool was that MG Grove had not promulgated a “narrative,” that he asked “fair questions” regarding the ISIL assessment tool, and that he had not been dictatorial about the tool. Other witnesses also did not provide any indication of inappropriate changes to the assessment tool, or that it was distorted.

Regarding a change in the J2 Weekly Update, we agree that the focus and tone of one passage of that specific Weekly Update was significantly changed from the original input provided by the analyst. However, the significant changes were made by a supervisor, not the CCJ2 leaders, and those changes were based on additional inputs and a broader focus for the discussion in that Weekly Update. In addition, the J2 Weekly Update was intended to be MG Grove’s own assessment of the entire USCENTCOM area of responsibility, and based on a wide variety of factors in addition to what the intelligence analysts saw, including operational developments and results of USCENTCOM discussions with military, political, and social leaders in the area of responsibility. Moreover, this Weekly Update fully explained the basis for its assessment. We do not believe that it is fair, or accurate, to state that this J2 Weekly Update distorted intelligence.

View of Other Intelligence Officials on USCENTCOM Intelligence Products

We believe an important factor to consider was whether other intelligence officials outside USCENTCOM who often had insight into the same intelligence that formed the basis for CCJ2 intelligence products believed those CCJ2 intelligence products were distorted. While those officials did not conduct a systemic comparison of the intelligence products, their perspective provides insight on whether USCENTCOM’s intelligence products were markedly different in tone or outlook from other intelligence products their organizations produced on similar subjects. We therefore sought the view of those officials, who worked in the ODNI, the DIA, the Joint Staff, and elsewhere.

The testimony of those officials was mixed. Some saw USCENTCOM’s products as consistent with those from the Intelligence Community. Others thought that USCENTCOM’s intelligence products were somewhat more optimistic than their products, although they all also thought that USCENTCOM’s products were not inaccurate or unreasonable. None of these

witnesses asserted that they perceived a deliberate or systematic attempt by USCENTCOM to distort intelligence.

For example, Director Clapper said that while intelligence assessments are subjective judgments, and that there are always differences of degree, he did not see any blatant discrepancies between USCENTCOM's products and the Intelligence Community products. Another Intelligence Community representative who worked closely with USCENTCOM stated that USCENTCOM's intelligence assessments were generally consistent with the Intelligence Community's assessments and that "on the national products, I have not seen any great variance between the [USCENTCOM] and the national level." This official stated, for example, that MG Grove often had to defend his analysts' assessments, which sometimes differed from the deployed ground commanders, but that MG Grove handled this uncomfortable task with integrity and that MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman never acted to downplay ISIL capabilities and success. Another official stated that USCENTCOM's views were very close to the Intelligence Community's view the vast majority of the time, but, when there was a difference, USCENTCOM tended to have a somewhat more positive view of the circumstances.

The DIA Director stated that he had never seen any USCENTCOM intelligence assessments regarding the counter-ISIL campaign that caused him concerns about USCENTCOM's objectivity, and that its intelligence products were balanced, used appropriate analytical rigor, and were well sourced. He added that the DIA and the CCJ2 sometimes have divergent views but that was normal in the intelligence practice.

Several operational commanders provided similar testimony. For example, one stated he never had any reason to question the accuracy of USCENTCOM intelligence analysis, and that neither MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, nor Mr. Rizzio suggested or directed they portray their assessments in a more positive light or questioned their sources for reporting "bad news."

However, some witnesses said that there were differences in intelligence products. For example, one DIA official stated that USCENTCOM's assessments were generally consistent with that of members of the Intelligence Community, but that USCENTCOM's intelligence analysis was generally more positive than the DIA's, and that MG Grove frequently stated that USCENTCOM had access to operational field reporting that the DIA did not see. Similarly, the Director of Intelligence for the Joint Staff believed that USCENTCOM overall had a more positive assessment of the effects that were being achieved against ISIL than he did from reviewing the same sources. However, he also told us that it was not unusual to have different viewpoints of the same facts.

A Joint Staff official similarly stated that he believed that MG Grove and USCENTCOM, as a “command,” had a more positive assessment of the counter-ISIL campaign than the Joint Staff did from looking at the same information. One subordinate commander told us he had no knowledge of anyone intentionally fabricating or manipulating intelligence analysis, but that he believed the USCENTCOM leadership, including GEN Austin and MG Grove, had a more optimistic characterization of the operational campaign as a whole than he thought the facts warranted. Another deployed Combined Joint Task Force OIR senior intelligence official told us that USCENTCOM intelligence assessments were “for the most part” accurate, that most of the assessments coming out of USCENTCOM were “within the range of feasible,” but probably at the “most aspirational side of the spectrum.” He stated that if there were a range of options for an assessment, USCENTCOM frequently used the end of the spectrum closest to what was planned by the operation.

Our Analytical Assessment of the Sample of Intelligence Products

Finally, our analytical assessment provided mixed results. It did not show a trend or pattern of changes that would lead to a conclusion of distortion. The edits we found did not show a statistically significant trend or pattern in the changes in the overall tone of the products that would support an allegation of distortion. Instead, we found a statistically significant difference in the population where more documents were changed in overall tone to portray ISIL as more positive, than those changing them to be more negative. We also did not find a trend or pattern in how the overall document tone changed for the ISF.

For individual edits, we did not find a statistically significant difference at the 90-percent confidence level across the entire time period for ISIL and ISF individual tone changes. In one time period, from October 2014 to January 2015, the raw numbers in the sample product review show a greater number of ISIL-weaker tone changes and fewer number of ISIL-stronger tone changes. This difference is statistically significant at the 87-percent confidence level. We believe the greater number of ISIL-weaker tone changes may have contributed to some analysts’ perception of distortion. These individual edits are an indication of the types of edits that analysts vividly remembered and contributed to the perception of distortion.

Overall Conclusion Regarding Distortion

In sum, we did not find systematic distortion of intelligence related to OIR products by CCJ2 leaders, or misconduct by them. However, we did find a strong perception of such distortion among many analysts and managers working on those products. We identified the factors that led to these perceptions, including changes in product formats and processes, differing management styles and philosophy from new CCJ2 leaders, and several key incidents that became widely discussed in the workforce. Although the results of our sample review were mixed, some of the individual edits may have contributed to analysts’ perceptions of distortion. Insufficient

communication and feedback also exacerbated the perception. We also found that some officials in the Intelligence Community, but not all, believed that USCENTCOM's intelligence assessments were more optimistic than theirs, although not systematically distorted.

C. Alleged Suppression of Intelligence

We also investigated allegations that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders suppressed analysts' intelligence assessments. In the classified version of the report, we examine in detail specific instances of alleged suppression of intelligence.

One allegation was that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders suppressed intelligence information by not reporting a massacre by ISIL forces in Hit, Iraq, in October 2014.

We also investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders suppressed reporting on the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) activities. In addition, we investigated allegations that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders suppressed intelligence information regarding the potential fall of Ramadi, Iraq, in April 2015 to ISIL.

In addition, we investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leadership declined to publish a warning paper by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Team concerning the threat of chemical weapons use by ISIL.

Conclusions Regarding Alleged Suppression of Intelligence

We did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations that CCJ2 leadership suppressed intelligence.

The most serious and troubling allegation was that the CCJ2 leadership attempted to systematically suppress intelligence reporting on the PMF. Several witnesses testified that it seemed more difficult to advance intelligence products on the PMF.

Other witnesses disagreed, asserting that the CCJ2 and others provided frequent reporting on the PMF, but that the leadership wanted to ensure the reporting was accurate, placed in context, and adequately sourced.

The evidence we uncovered indicated that reporting on the PMF received a higher level of scrutiny before they were advanced to GEN Austin or outside USCENTCOM. However, we did not find that reporting on that topic was prohibited. The CCJ2 frequently reported on the PMF. We were also informed that there were several “deep dive” analyses provided on that topic, and that analysts were able to brief GEN Austin on the PMF. USCENTCOM leadership told us that they received frequent reports on the PMF, both from within USCENTCOM, and from members of the Intelligence Community, and they were well aware of the PMF’s actions.

In short, we believe that this topic was controversial; it received a greater level of scrutiny and questioning before intelligence products discussing it were approved. However, while it was more difficult to advance these products, intelligence on this topic was not suppressed.

With regard to the other allegations, the evidence did not show an intent by CCJ2 leadership to suppress intelligence, or that their actions caused intelligence to be suppressed. We did see, consistent with our findings in the distortion section of this report, a cautious tendency by the CCJ2 leadership to seek corroboration of certain intelligence, particularly when the intelligence was unconfirmed, open source, or on a controversial subject. We make comments and recommendations regarding that issue in Part VII, Examination of Management Processes, of this report. However, this did not reflect any systematic or improper attempt to suppress intelligence.

D. Alleged Delaying of Intelligence

The complainants also alleged that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders delayed certain intelligence assessments.

For example, we investigated an allegation that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders delayed or prevented publication of four President's Daily Brief (PDB) articles relating to the fighting in Anbar and Mosul in 2014 and 2015.

In the classified version of the report, we examine these allegations, and the evidence regarding them in detail. Because the information is classified, we cannot provide those details. However, we concluded that the evidence does not support the allegations that CCJ2 leadership dissented or objected to the PDB articles in an effort to delay, suppress, or distort intelligence.

One of the allegations, for example, was that USCENTCOM attempted to delay a PDB until after GEN Austin had testified before Congress. However we concluded that the evidence showed that USCENTCOM's objections to the PDB article were reasonable, were based on concerns about the completeness and context of the PDB article, and were similar to concerns raised by the Joint Staff and members of the Intelligence Community. While some witnesses said they heard Mr. Rizzio express satisfaction that the PDB was delayed past GEN Austin's testimony, other witnesses present when those statement were alleged to have been made did not recall this, and Mr. Rizzio denied making such comments. He asserted that such an alleged delay until after GEN Austin testified before Congress was not the reason for any objections to the PDB article. The objections to the PDB article appeared to be based on good faith and were timely objections to the substance of the PDB. In short, we did not conclude that Mr. Rizzio acted inappropriately with regard to this PDB.

Moreover, according to witnesses familiar with the staffing of PDB articles, an Intelligence Community member outside the DoD is the executive agent for the PDB process and manages the coordination of such articles. Any combatant command's intelligence input into an Intelligence Community PDB article goes through the DIA. An official at the DIA told us that while DIA writers may coordinate articles with combatant commands, "they [combatant commands] sure as heck don't have final editorial or writing authority over those articles" and stated that USCENTCOM does not have the ability to prevent a PDB article from being published.

E. Other Issues

During our investigation, witnesses and media reports raised other issues. We review those matters in the next sections.

1. Alleged Deletion of Emails and Data

Two media articles raised the issue that emails and data files with intelligence products relevant to the investigation may have been deleted from USCENTCOM systems. One article specifically alleged that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman deleted “emails and files from computer systems before the inspector general could examine them.”

Alleged Deleted Emails

In response to the media articles alleging deleted emails, we contacted Complainant 1, who told us that he could not locate certain JWICS emails he deemed important to the investigation. However, in December 2015, at our request, a technical expert at the DIA located Complainant 1’s JWICS emails. The technical expert contacted Complainant 1 and assisted him in accessing his emails, which were archived. We also contacted Complainant 2, who told us he was not missing any emails.

Neither the complainants nor any witness alleged that MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman deleted emails to interfere with our investigation. Moreover, as described in the next sections of this report, we determined that both MG Grove’s and Mr. Ryckman’s email accounts were subject to a journaling process which automatically kept a separate copy of all of the emails they sent or received, regardless of whether they deleted them from their own email accounts. We obtained copies of all of MG Grove’s and Mr. Ryckman’s journaled emails. Therefore, any deletion by MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman of emails within their own accounts would have no effect on the copies we obtained from the journaling retention process.

Email Retention Protocols

Emails of O-6s/GG-15s and above

To assure ourselves that we obtained all the relevant emails, we interviewed two technical experts from the DIA and USCENTCOM regarding storage protocols for USCENTCOM emails. The experts told us that all sent and received emails of military personnel in the grade of O-6 and above and civilian personnel in the grade of GG-15 and above were automatically saved in a journaling process. The experts stated that these users could not permanently delete any journaled emails, and that the journaled emails were retained for at least 7 years.

Emails of O-5s//GG-14s and below

Both experts stated that for military personnel in the grade of O-5 and below, and civilian personnel in the grade of GG-14 and below, USCENTCOM used two email archiving systems, Enterprise Vault and Collaborative Operating Environment (COE). According to the USCENTCOM technical expert, USCENTCOM SIPRNET users utilized the Enterprise Vault throughout the entire investigative period of our review.

Under the Enterprise Vault system, JWICS emails remained in a user's account for 21 days (14 days for SIPRNET emails) before automatic archiving, unless the emails were deleted by the user before the 21-day period expired (14 days for SIPRNET users). Once archived under the Enterprise Vault system, users did not have the ability to delete any emails.

According to the DIA technical expert, the majority of USCENTCOM JWICS users migrated from the Enterprise Vault to the COE beginning in Summer 2015. USCENTCOM JWICS users who migrated to the COE beginning in the summer of 2015 had the ability to delete only their own emails within the COE system at any time. However, this only affected emails whose users had moved to the COE system – after the migration to that system began in summer 2015, which was after the events that our review focused on.

Alleged Deleted Data Files

Complainant 2 told us about a draft First Look slide that he produced in August or September of 2014 on which, during processing, Mr. Ryckman allegedly wrote “we will never use this term [retreat].”⁸⁰ Complainant 2 later informed us that he was unable to find the slide and that he discovered, when he looked for the slide in August 2015 during our investigation, that various IFC production folders containing draft versions of intelligence products for the August, September, and October 2014 time period had been deleted.

Complainant 2 also told us the slides were shared and edited over email. We searched through emails and found what we believed to be a copy of the draft slide in question with Mr. Ryckman's comment. The complainant told us that it was “probably” the slide he was referring to.

Separately, we determined that some IFC production folders for August, September, and October 2014 had been deleted prior to the initiation of our investigation.

⁸⁰ We discuss this slide in Part VI.B.2 of this report.

We interviewed two data storage technical experts regarding data storage protocols for unclassified, secret, and top secret shared drive data. The technical experts told us there was no data loss due to equipment failure during the investigative time-frame.

However they told us that USCENTCOM shared drive users had the ability to create, modify, or delete folders on those drives for which they were granted access. A backup server retained deleted documents from USCENTCOM unclassified and secret shared drives for 60 days. After 60 days the deleted document was permanently deleted from the backup server. Similarly, USCENTCOM top secret shared drives retain deleted files anywhere from one week to 45 days depending on the server capacity and were then permanently deleted.

We interviewed a member of the IFC production team who also reviewed and prepared final OIR products. He told us that personnel from the USCENTCOM C4 Systems Directorate (CCJ6) had advised him in January 2015 that he could not expand the size of IFC production folders on the CCJ2 shared drive. Furthermore, the J6 personnel advised him that he had to delete files in order to free space for additional storage. The production team member told us that he recalled deleting OIR products from IFC production folders between 5 and 15 times in early to mid-2015 and that he took this action on his own initiative in order to save the most recent OIR products. He stated that he deleted these products before the initiation of our investigation, and that he has not deleted any files from the IFC production folders since our investigation began.

Another member of the IFC production team told us that he had deleted older IFC copies of intelligence products from the IFC production folders when he received storage space error messages in order to free drive storage space for newly created IFC intelligence products. He stated that he deleted the files for a few months starting in January 2015.

Both employees stated that they had no established deletion methodology but deleted the oldest products first. One told us:

We would go back to the oldest information that we had in the archive. Well, first we deleted anything that we thought was in the folder that we didn't need any more. We went back through and looked for old SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures] that we weren't using. We looked for old source information that we didn't think would be relevant anymore before we went to the archive. And when we kept running out of space, we realized that the PowerPoint presentations are hefty, they're hefty file size, so we started deleting back from the oldest day until we could save the new PowerPoints. And then we would go from there until it happened again, and then once again we would go back to the oldest information and delete from there until we had enough space on the drive.

To address the deleted files issue, we also identified various other folders used by the CCJ2 to save drafts through the production process and to retain final copies of intelligence products produced during the same time period. Specifically, we identified data folders on USCENTCOM secret and top secret shared drives containing final CCJ2 products and several draft versions of intelligence products for the August, September, October 2014 time period. We also obtained various other copies of product versions for the August, September, October 2014 time period through our search of emails, which shared the products during the editing process. For example, through our search of the other production folders and emails, we found nine different versions of the second complainant's draft First Look slide discussed previously.

On September 3, 2015, we sent the Commander, USCENTCOM, a notice to preserve all records related to the investigation and any and all CCJ2 documents related to intelligence processing. MG Grove told us the USCENTCOM deputy inspector general notified him of the data preservation directive. Additionally, one of the production team members stated that at the beginning of the DoD OIG investigation, the JICCENT Commander and MG Grove advised everyone "To be completely up front and honest and don't get rid of anything." We found no indications that any files were deleted after this directive.

Conclusion

We determined that USCENTCOM's journaling retention process retained all sent and received emails of military personnel in the grade of O-6 and above and civilian personnel in the grade of GG-15 and above for at least 7 years. Separately, at our request, a technical expert at the DIA helped Complainant 1 retrieve the emails he had been unable to find. No other witnesses complained of missing emails, and we saw no evidence that emails relevant to this investigation were deleted.

We did find that members of the IFC production team had deleted IFC files that contained some draft versions of USCENTCOM OIR intelligence products from the August, September, and October 2014 time period to free space for newly produced products. We determined that they took these actions on their own initiative, prior to the initiation of this investigation, to save storage space. We received no other complaints of deleted files.

However, despite the deletion of some IFC files, we believe that most, if not all, of any deleted IFC files were available in other folders during the editing process, or were attached to emails that distributed the files. We conducted an exhaustive search of production folders used to save draft electronic documents at various stages of the production process and found many draft intelligence documents among the emails that transferred draft files between the various reviewers in the process. We believe that, as a result, we were able to locate similar documents to the IFC versions that were deleted to save storage space well before our investigation began.

1. Number of Complainants

Allegation

During the course of the investigation, The Daily Beast published an article on September 9, 2015, stating that 50 intelligence analysts working at USCENTCOM had “formally complained” about altered and politicized intelligence reports. The Daily Beast article has been widely quoted by other news articles.

Conclusion

Only two individuals submitted formal complaints about USCENTCOM intelligence reports. Those two complaints were forwarded to our office for investigation. We considered and reviewed information provided by the two complainants as well as many other witnesses in the course of the 150 interviews we conducted during our investigation. Some provided testimony in support of the allegations. However, they were not complainants, and 50 intelligence analysts did not “formally complain” about altered and politicized intelligence reports, as alleged in a news article.

2. ***News Accounts Regarding Alleged Instructions to “Cut it out” and “Toe the line”***

Allegation

We investigated an allegation that USCENTCOM analysts were directed to “cut it out” and “toe the line” while reporting on intelligence assessments in relation to the counter-ISIL campaign.

According to an article posted on Fox News entitled *Emails show DoD analysts told to ‘cut it out’ on ISIS warnings; IG probe expands*, dated November 23, 2015, USCENTCOM analysts “were pressured to ease off negative assessments about the Islamic State threat and were even told in an email to ‘cut it out.’” Furthermore, the article stated “at least two emails” sent to analysts and “now in the possession of the Pentagon inspector general” directed the analysts to “cut it out” and “toe the line.”

We searched approximately 2 million CCJ2 emails for the terms “cut it out” and “toe the line.” We found no emails with those phrases related to the intelligence assessment of the counter-ISIL campaign. Accordingly, we reached out to Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 regarding the Fox News report and asked if they could provide the emails.

Complainant 1 replied by email dated November 30, 2015, “I’ve read the press with interest, but I cannot specifically recall an email that explicitly states ‘cut it out’ or ‘toe the line.’”

Complainant 2 replied by email dated December 3, 2015, “Unfortunately, I was not included in those particular emails, nor do I have access to them. I certainly would have provided them to you if I did ... I can assure you of that.”

We found no witness who had knowledge or evidence of any emails relating to this Fox News article. However, in describing her view of Mr. Ryckman’s concept of building an analytic intelligence line, a senior analyst told us:

Mr. Ryckman’s a little bit easier because he’s very specific to say “we can’t just turn on a dime, you can’t just go against what we’ve analytically been saying. You got to toe the line.” There was a sense [what] I got back from the senior leadership that some of the analysis was schizophrenic. One day it would say one thing, the next day it was saying something else. And that’s confusing to the CG, which is fair. That is a fair concern coming from the senior-level leadership. However, that doesn’t mean that you don’t make the analytic turn when you need to make the analytic turn.

Conclusion

We found no evidence to support the news article that DoD analysts were sent emails instructing them to “cut it out” or “toe the line” on ISIS warnings. We determined the senior analyst’s use of the phrase “toe the line” was in the context of building an analytic line and not associated with any email or communications to impose a narrative on intelligence assessments.

3. Analysts Allegedly Urged to Leave the CCJ2

Allegations

We investigated allegations that Mr. Rizzio threatened that analysts should leave the CCJ2 if they “were not on board” with the way the CCJ2 was doing business. We also investigated an allegation that Mr. Rizzio was temporarily reassigned from his duties for siding with analysts who believed they were pressured to distort intelligence products.

Analysts Allegedly Urged to Leave if They Were Not On Board

Complainant 1 alleged that Mr. Rizzio twice stated that analysts should leave if they “were not on board” with the way the J2 Directorate was doing business.

Complainant 1 told us that he attended a meeting hosted by Mr. Ryckman and Mr. Rizzio to address analysts’ concerns regarding intelligence production. Complainant 1 stated that an analyst discussed the perception that Mr. Ryckman was changing the message or “cooking the books.” According to Complainant 1, Mr. Ryckman responded that the analysts were not presenting the facts to support their analysis. We discuss this meeting, which occurred in October 2014, in Part VI.B.12. of this report.

According to two witnesses, they raised concerns to Mr. Ryckman that they were allowed to present only good news stories and stated Mr. Ryckman denied that was the case. One of the two witnesses said, “Mr. Ryckman basically didn’t see merit to what we were talking about.”

Two other witnesses recalled Mr. Rizzio saying at the meeting that analysts need to be “on board.” These witnesses said they did not perceive the remark as threatening but simply that “we need to work together as a team regarding a dynamic intelligence process.”

One of the two witnesses told us:

So, Mr. Ryckman left the meeting. [A meeting attendee] said, “Well, that was f--king pointless.” Basically. He was mad but he was also I think he thought everyone sort of thought that. Well, it was pretty silent. Mr. Rizzio basically sort of reprimanded [the attendee who used profanity] ... [The attendee] left. And then Mr. Rizzio was really pissed, he was mad after the interaction with [the attendee], and basically told us, “Hey, Mr. Ryckman and the J2 are not cooking the books.” I remember him specifically saying that.

In an email dated October 13, 2014, to three co-workers, one analyst wrote:

At the end of the 10/8 0845 meeting of SIAs and SIOs, Buddy [Rizzio] held everyone behind after Ryckman left and insisted that in fact there's no attempt to 'change the message' or insist on good news stories. He also very pointedly said—twice—that anyone who was not 'on board' with the way were [sic] are doing business should find work in another organization. So act with a little caution and choose your battles wisely, because the weirdness continues.

An analyst who was at the meeting said that after Mr. Ryckman departed, Mr. Rizzio said, "guns everybody down, starting with [one meeting attendee], and essentially said, 'If you can't support the J2 and Mr. Ryckman, you need to get out. You need to resign your positions and leave.'" This analyst stated that he was paraphrasing, but "That is pretty much what he said."

Another analyst who was at the meeting said that after Mr. Ryckman left the meeting, one attendee was "visibly upset," and stated to those assembled, "Well, that was f--king pointless." This analyst added that Mr. Rizzio "Basically sort of reprimanded [the attendee]." He explained he felt that Mr. Rizzio was saying if an analyst was not going to be a team player, was going to be disagreeable at every turn, when they are working 6 to 7 days a week trying to put these products out, did not want to help, or wanted to hinder the process, then the analyst should work somewhere else. The analyst stated, "That's the way I took it. I didn't take it as specifically, if you're not going to write this narrative, you should find work somewhere else." He stated, "I didn't take it that way."

A third analyst, who also attended the meeting, stated that he did not recall the comments attributed to Mr. Rizzio. He told us:

I'll be honest, again I was working seven days a week, 14 hours a day. To be honest with you, I went to Rizzio's office somewhere in that period. I literally came to work one day without shoes. I just forgot them. No, I'm serious. I got in the car and drove all way here, got out and looked down and had no shoes on. I mean there was a lot of fuzziness back there too. I mean I can't – I got to be honest.

A senior analyst, who was present at the meeting, described Mr. Rizzio's comments as "not to get on board with the way we are doing things, but on board with doing things the right way, the complete way." He said Mr. Rizzio conveyed to those present that the work was going to be hard and that they had to look at the complete picture when compiling reports. The senior analyst added, "A lot of these folks [analysts] want us to just trust them," and described their attitude as, "Hey I've been working this for 10 years. I know this is the answer." He continued, "But they can't provide the 'why.' So that's really what was being requested."

The senior analyst added that Mr. Rizzio stressed the need for adequate sourcing to ensure what “we’re providing is as accurate as possible.” He stated that Mr. Rizzio noted some analysts did not like to work weekends or objected to long hours and told them they should not have chosen intelligence as a career because that was the nature of the business. The senior analyst stated Mr. Rizzio never would have said, “If you’re not on board with this narrative, you got to leave.” He concluded, “And certainly, there was no warning or threat involved in any of that. There’s no way that was conveyed.”

With regard to the alleged statement that anyone not on board should leave the organization, Mr. Rizzio told us, “I don’t recall the exact words I said. But it’s clear [the meeting attendee who used profanity] did not understand the analytic line concept and had conflated it in hindsight with a different concept.”

Mr. Rizzio also stated that after Mr. Ryckman departed the meeting he admonished the meeting attendee who used profanity for his statement about the meeting being pointless. He stated:

[The attendee] shot up, said words to the effect, “what a bunch of expletives.” And then I corrected him, because this, I thought was inappropriate after the VJ2 had come over to discuss this with us based upon concerns that you had, to come to try to explain it to you from a tradecraft perspective, and that he shot up with everybody else present and was disrespectful to somebody senior to him. So, I corrected him at that point in time, and I didn’t – we interacted after that and I was just trying to correct him because I thought that was inappropriate in such a theatrical way to stand up and say that with myself and several other GG-15s and 14s present.

Allegation that Mr. Rizzio was temporarily reassigned

A New York Times news article dated September 23, 2015, reported that Mr. Rizzio was temporarily reassigned from his duties as the JICCEN Defense Intelligence Senior Leader in punishment for siding with analysts who believed they felt pressure to keep their assessments positive.

Mr. Rizzio denied that he was temporarily reassigned. Rather, he told us that he voluntarily took leave. He explained that one day over the New Year holidays in January 2015, MG Grove expressed to him in a one-on-one meeting his frustration with the quality of intelligence products. Mr. Rizzio told us that in a subsequent meeting on January 8, 2015, which he described as “cordial, and matter of fact,” MG Grove stated that he wanted products to be “perfect” and “on time.”

Mr. Rizzio stated that when he reviewed products on the afternoon of January 8, 2015, he found them to “have challenges” with quality, logic, and sourcing issues. He told us that he did not have time to do a detailed review so he did the best he could to triage the products before submitting them on time to MG Grove. He stated that after MG Grove reviewed the products, MG Grove called him with concerns about the products. Mr. Rizzio stated that MG Grove told him “in a very stern tone” to “clear the room” of the analysts who were present. Mr. Rizzio added that after the analysts left the room he and MG Grove had a “heated discussion” about the quality of the products he had just submitted. Mr. Rizzio stated that after that heated conversation he stayed late to clean up the products before resubmitting them to MG Grove.

Mr. Rizzio stated that on the following day the JICCEN Commander advised him that MG Grove had taken him “off the [OIR] products.” Mr. Rizzio stated that he saw this as a vote of no confidence. He then contacted his career manager at the DIA to request another assignment. He said he also decided to take 2 weeks off to consider his options.

Before departing on leave, Mr. Rizzio met with Mr. Ryckman to discuss the situation. Mr. Rizzio said he told Mr. Ryckman that he intended to depart immediately for 2 weeks’ leave and that Mr. Ryckman responded, “The J2 doesn’t like people to take 2 weeks off. You can only take 1 week at time.”

Mr. Rizzio continued, “I said, I don’t care. I’m taking 2 weeks, and then I’m going to make a decision. So, I got up, started getting ready to take my 2 week leave, and I left that afternoon, but before I did apparently the VJ2 talked to the J2, and then they both called me up.” Mr. Rizzio stated in that conversation that he told MG Grove that one of the reasons why the products were not up to standards was that he [Mr. Rizzio] did not have much time after their meeting to be able to do a detailed review of the products. Mr. Rizzio told us that MG Grove apologized and “said words to the effect, ‘Buddy, if you had told me the time, I would have given you more time.’”

Mr. Rizzio said he informed the workforce only that he was taking leave. He did not discuss the reasons for his leave.

Mr. Rizzio told us he spoke with Mr. Ryckman a couple of times over the weekend and reduced his leave to 1 week. After that week, he returned to work. Mr. Rizzio added that upon his return there was a noticeable difference for the better in MG Grove’s interaction with the workforce, so much so that a colleague from a different command mentioned that it was noticeable to the workforce that MG Grove’s interaction with people was much better.

MG Grove told us that he relied heavily on Mr. Rizzio to enforce analytic tradecraft in the review process for the J2 intelligence products. MG Grove added that Mr. Rizzio took a week of

leave because he was under a lot of pressure and that taking leave was a good thing for Mr. Rizzio.

Conclusion

The evidence did not support the allegation that Mr. Rizzio stated that analysts should leave if they “were not on board” with the way the CCJ2 was doing business. Most of the witnesses who recalled the comments interpreted them not as a threat to analysts to leave USCENTCOM, but rather as an instruction to work together as a team, or a comment to stress the need for adequate sourcing to ensure what “we’re providing is as accurate as possible.” It appears that a few witnesses took his comments differently, in a more threatening tone, but we saw no evidence that was his intended message.

Second, the evidence showed that Mr. Rizzio was not temporarily reassigned as punishment for siding with analysts who believed they felt pressure to keep their assessments positive. Mr. Rizzio voluntarily took leave after a heated conversation with MG Grove concerning a requirement that products be on time and perfect. Mr. Rizzio said he was frustrated with the review process and with the heated conversation with MG Grove. After the conversation, MG Grove subsequently apologized to Mr. Rizzio, who still took the leave.

4. Media Reports: Director Clapper

Allegation

We investigated media reports concerning frequent contacts between the Director of National Intelligence, James R. Clapper, and MG Grove. Additionally, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen wrote to the Secretary of Defense expressing concern that Director Clapper may have exerted pressure on USCENTCOM to portray the fight against ISIL in a more positive manner.

We interviewed Director Clapper regarding his contacts with MG Grove. Director Clapper told us that since September 2014, he spoke with MG Grove twice a week before he briefed the President on intelligence matters. Director Clapper stated that if MG Grove was unavailable, he would speak with the USCENTCOM Deputy J2, Mr. Ryckman. The Joint Chiefs of Staff J2 or the J2 Deputy would also participate in the VTCs.

Conclusion

We describe the details of these briefings in our classified report. However, the evidence did not support the allegation that Director Clapper exerted pressure on USCENTCOM intelligence products, or attempted to pressure USCENTCOM to portray the fight against ISIL in a more positive light. Director Clapper did receive regular, brief updates from CCJ2 leadership two mornings a week, before he went to brief the President. Director Clapper held the calls to determine whether there were any overnight developments that he should know about. We also interviewed several witnesses who participated in the calls, or who conducted the call when Director Clapper did not, and none said there was any pressure exerted on USCENTCOM intelligence officials or products. While the regular call to USCENTCOM was not replicated for other combatant commands, USCENTCOM was the only one fighting a war. We found no indication that anything about the calls was inappropriate.

5. Alleged Attempt to Influence Witness Testimony

Allegation

We investigated an allegation that a JICCENT lieutenant colonel and another analyst attempted to restrict how USCENTCOM analysts would testify in response to DoD OIG questions in this investigation. According to one witness, the lieutenant colonel, at a meeting of analysts after the DoD OIG investigation began, attempted to “invoke the loyalty card” in comments he made to those present. The analyst stated:

We had [*sic*] [the lieutenant colonel] say, “If you’re contacted by the IG, contact the IG [*sic*]” – he’s like “be aware that Grove is the senior intelligence officer here and we all work for him.” Which again, you don’t – you’re not saying it, but the obvious implication of that statement frankly is that you know if you’re going to, you know, start talking, you know, down the IG, you’re going against the organization and invoking the loyalty card and so on.

The same analyst alleged in an email to DoD OIG investigators that he had concerns about comments made by his supervisor concerning this investigation. Allegedly, the supervisor “made it very clear in direct conversations with key members of the ISIL team when the complaint first surfaced that he regarded the complaint as disloyal and a personal attack on his integrity,” as well as “a personal attack on the team” and one that “was going to sully their name ... throughout the community.”

Conclusion

The evidence did not support these allegations. Other than the witness who made the allegation, no other witness interpreted the lieutenant colonel’s comment in a threatening way. The other witnesses heard the comments as an instruction to cooperate with the DoD OIG investigation, not as an instruction to testify in a certain way or not to challenge the J2.

With regard to the allegation about the supervisor’s comment, the analyst who made the allegation backed off his allegation in a subsequent interview with us. In conclusion, we did not substantiate either allegation. We found no evidence that either the lieutenant colonel or the supervisor attempted to restrict or interfere with analysts’ testimony in the DoD OIG investigation.

6. Command Climate

During our investigation, we received allegations and heard witness testimony regarding the CCJ2 command climate, including the management styles of the CCJ2 leadership. Some witnesses labelled the command climate as “miserable,” “hostile,” or a “toxic” work environment, while others disagreed. We also reviewed various survey results assessing climate issues within the CCJ2.

In this section of the report, we first provide examples of witness testimony about the command climate within the CCJ2 and JICCEN, and the management styles of its senior leadership. We then discuss the survey results regarding the command climate in the CCJ2, and changes to it over time.

Alleged “Miserable,” “Hostile,” or “Toxic” Work Environment

In his complaint, Complainant 1 wrote that for many years the CCJ2 had been a “miserable” work environment and that climate surveys clearly supported this characterization. Complainant 1 also wrote that MG Grove was a source of the “hostile work environment.” A November 2015 Daily Beast article reported that several individuals described USCENCOM as having a “toxic climate,” in which MG Grove created an expectation that “those who toe the official, upbeat line ... are rewarded, while those who don’t are marginalized.”

In our investigation, we found that low morale and a stressful work environment in the CCJ2 and JICCEN was an issue of concern well before the arrival of MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman in 2014. For instance, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), DIA, and USCENCOM climate/workforce engagement survey results indicated that the overall morale and command climate within the CCJ2 was low in 2013 and 2014 prior to the arrival of MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman. Additionally, the results of the DEOMI and USCENCOM climate surveys taken in 2013 reflected the perceived need to improve the workforce’s access to and communications with previous senior intelligence leaders; the need to improve division, branch, and team level leadership (GG-14s and GG-15s); the need to hold people accountable; and the need to improve CCJ2-wide communications and collaboration. The CCJ2 results from the DIA Workforce Engagement Survey taken in May 2014, reflected decreasing scores in various areas, such as strategic management, effective leadership-senior leaders, training and development, performance-based rewards and advancement, effective leadership-supervisor, effective leadership-empowerment, and work life balance.

In our interviews with CCJ2 analysts, we found a mix of witness testimony describing the CCJ2 command climate. While no witness described the command climate within the CCJ2 or JICCENT as hostile or toxic, various witnesses described it as “terrible,” “poor,” “worst,” and “bad.” Others were more positive. Nearly all witnesses identified USCENCOM’s mission and high operational tempo as contributing factors affecting the command climate. Several witnesses identified the continued reduction in the CCJ2 workforce as also affecting the command climate.

For example, one witness told us that the operational tempo changed just as MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived at USCENCOM. The witness related that for the past couple of years, the CCJ2 endured a high operational tempo, a reduced budget, and fewer military and civilian personnel. The witness stated that during the previous couple of years, incoming military personnel were “generally less experienced and less prepared, and the budget cuts on contracts resulted in less experienced contractor personnel.” He stated that the CCJ2 was doing more with less.

A senior analyst who arrived at USCENCOM in 2011 told us the “terrible” command climate predated the arrival of MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman. The senior analyst stated that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman inherited a “bad” command climate where there was no accountability. The senior analyst stated that some personnel had been allowed to stagnate in their positions, and that there had been limited to no accountability and “almost no adult supervision when it comes to tradecraft analysis.”

Another senior analyst stated that the command climate varied from “great” to “not so great” within the different divisions. He said, however, that USCENCOM had “always been a rough organization to be in command climate wise.” He attributed this to lots of hard work and long hours. The witness stated “rode hard, put up wet ... just a constant sprint and no one takes the ‘it’s a marathon kind of approach.’” He added that the lack of accountability was “the biggest complaint” that contributed to command climate.

Another witness told us that the command climate was at its “worst” around February 2015 and that everyone felt “pretty demoralized and minimized.” The witness added that the command climate “improved drastically” from November 2015 to February 2016 and was “up to normal good.” The witness stated, “it’s never wonderful at CENTCOM. It’s a stressful environment.”

Another witness stated that the command climate was an “interesting dichotomy between a fair amount of exhaustion and disgruntlement,” because of high operational tempo and a “tremendous sense of fulfillment.” The witness characterized the dichotomy as “love and hate,” because while they make “a positive difference,” it took “a physical, and emotional, and mental toll.”

CCJ2 Senior Intelligence Leaders' Management Styles

We also heard from many witnesses about their opinions or concerns regarding the leadership styles of CCJ2 and JICCEN management.

In his complaint, Complainant 1 asserted that the CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders were “dangerously isolated” from the workforce and had “little understanding of the impact of their actions.” Complainant 1 asserted that MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and Mr. Rizzio had “destroyed” workforce morale and were a negative influence on the work environment.

In his complaint, Complainant 1 wrote:

[MG Grove] is also a source of the hostile work environment. He is frequently irritable, angry and irrational with analysts. [MG Grove] has inspired a rule-by-fear work environment in which his subordinates are afraid to approach him on topics, and will impose his orders in the most literal way, fearing the consequences of any actions that might appear to be non-compliance [*sic*].

Complainant 1 told us that MG Grove could sometimes “be a little brittle,” “very cordial,” or alternatively “kind of out of control, angry, irrational, mean old man mode.” Complainant 1 stated that MG Grove was “kind of disconnected ... very focused upstream, and not much downstream.” Complainant 1 added that MG Grove was very focused on making the USCENCOM Commander happy.

Complainant 1 related that MG Grove got worked up over minor things and would fly off the handle and get very upset. Complainant 1 added that MG Grove “kind of raises his voice,” gets “a little red in the face,” and “gets very directive.” Complainant 1 characterized these as not collegial discussions. When asked if MG Grove hollered or screamed, Complainant 1 responded that he never personally witnessed such behavior. Complainant 1 also told us that MG Grove could “be really hard on people ... he’s not a consensus builder ... somewhat dictatorial, sometimes nicely, sometimes not nicely.”

We asked many witnesses about the CCJ2 senior leaders’ management styles and received mixed descriptions. Several witnesses described MG Grove as direct, intense, a perfectionist, risk averse, or wanting to be right instead of first. For example, Mr. Rizzio told us that MG Grove was “risk averse,” “wanted to be in control of the process,” “was a perfectionist,” and “he also wanted to ensure that the best product went out.” Mr. Rizzio stated that MG Grove “had a short temper” and occasionally spoke “harshly to people.” However, Mr. Rizzio also stated that “there was nothing unethical, immoral with [MG Grove’s or Mr. Ryckman’s] management style. It’s just different than what the workforce was used to.”

Other witnesses also described MG Grove as “risk averse.” An SIO stated that MG Grove would say, “I don’t care about being first with the truth I want to be right with the truth.”

Another witness, a Division Chief, told us that he never saw MG Grove treat subordinates improperly. The Division Chief continued that MG Grove “might have been short with them or he might have been upset or angry,” but MG Grove was never “unprofessional.” The Division Chief added, “I’ve heard that he had, but I can’t verify that.”

Several witnesses described MG Grove as “direct.” One senior analyst stated that MG Grove was not “a warm and fuzzy guy.” The senior analyst added that other had described MG Grove as being “terse” and “at times ... as being aggressive” because he was so overwhelmed right after he arrived as the J2. However, the senior analyst never saw this type of behavior from MG Grove. The senior analyst related that MG Grove was “somebody who was very direct, looking for very direct responses to the questions he was asking.”

Other witnesses described MG Grove as intense. An SIO told us that MG Grove was much more intense than previous CENTCOM J2s. He added that others had told him that MG Grove could be “a little animated sometimes” and “not pleasant to be there when he gets upset,” and that MG Grove’s interactions with him “have all been professional.” An SIA told us that MG Grove “was a little bit more intense than the previous J2, but not as intense as the other J2s.”

Another witness described MG Grove’s leadership style as “demanding” and stated that “MG Grove wants to get it right just like every other general officer.” However, the witness told us that MG Grove is a good leader who wants to hear your opinion and does not want “yes men or women.”

One CCJ2 leader told us MG Grove was a “positive leader” who “was very direct” and had a “very keen eye for detail,” but he was not prepared to take huge amounts of risk ... that would then damage the brand of the organization [CCJ2].”

Other witnesses described MG Grove’s management style as approachable, asking fair questions and not dictatorial. For example, one witness told us that during discussions, MG Grove has “never been super dictatorship ... that’s never come from him.”

A senior analyst told us that “people sort of prepped me on” MG Grove’s negative attributes before the analyst began working on the IFC. The witness stated that people’s negative descriptions of MG Grove did not describe the MG Grove with whom the witness interacted.

Another SIO described MG Grove as “hands on” and “approachable.” He stated that MG Grove always “listened intently” when someone had brought an issue to him. He added that MG Grove routinely sits down and has “cordial” sessions with the analysts. He stated that

figuratively, MG Grove takes his rank off and tells the analysts “let’s talk things out.” He further stated that MG Grove tries to empower his subordinates to do their jobs.

An SIA told us that it was frustrating not being able to see or receive direct feedback from CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders, but it had improved significantly since the spring of 2015.

Mr. Ryckman’s Management Style

The testimony about Mr. Ryckman’s management style was also mixed. When asked to describe Mr. Ryckman’s leadership style, Complainant 1 responded that Mr. Ryckman was “more laid back ... more collegial.” He said that Mr. Ryckman was “very detail oriented” and “a little bit of a micromanager.” Complainant 1 stated:

I, again, don’t always understanding [*sic*] where he’s coming from technically ... he has very specific places he wants to go sometimes on products, and I don’t understand. ... being a micromanager, he doesn’t really explain himself. He just says, you know, “do this.” So a lot of times I don’t understand the changes he makes or why. But he makes a lot of changes. ... I wouldn’t say he’s a great leader by any means.

When asked if he had ever seen Mr. Ryckman treat a subordinate inappropriately, Complainant 1 responded, “No.”

Mr. Rizzio told us that, like MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman was “risk averse” and “a perfectionist,” who often challenged Mr. Rizzio and the analysts over the use of terms. Mr. Rizzio stated that “it became a challenge that we had to find the right words” to characterize information for Mr. Ryckman.

An SIA who had worked with Mr. Ryckman since about 2001 described him as a very detailed oriented analyst. The witness stated:

[Mr. Ryckman] asks a lot of hard questions and you really better know your sourcing because he’s going to ask you how you came to your conclusion.

Another SIA told us that Mr. Ryckman initially worked more with his senior-level intelligence leaders and relied on them to filter information down to lower-level analysts, but that analysts now had a lot more opportunity to directly engage with Mr. Ryckman.

Another SIA stated that Mr. Ryckman was very engaging and would strongly debate issues with analysts. The SIA told us that interactions with Mr. Ryckman could range from combative to debate style and that analysts needed to be prepared for the back and forth style.

A Division Chief told us that Mr. Ryckman was “an analyst at the heart” and that Mr. Ryckman likes dialogue and figuring out how analysts arrived at their analysis. He added that Mr. Ryckman introduced new thoughts and alternative analysis and sometimes analysts took it the wrong way, but that Mr. Ryckman was a “very approachable,” “nice guy,” who treats people well.

An SIA told us that Mr. Ryckman was demanding and had very high standards concerning intelligence products. He stated that Mr. Ryckman would engage in a conversation with analysts, would consider options, and was open to discussion. He added that Mr. Ryckman provided feedback when he did not select an analyst’s “solution.”

Mr. Rizzio’s Management Style

Mr. Rizzio served in the JICCEN since 2010 and worked with several JICCEN commanders during his tenure. We asked witnesses about Mr. Rizzio’s leadership style. Their testimony about Mr. Rizzio also varied.

In his complaint, Complainant 1 wrote that Mr. Rizzio was a “classic toxic leader,” was fearful of his subordinates, and did not handle pressure well. When asked to describe Mr. Rizzio’s leadership style, Complainant 1 responded that Mr. Rizzio had a “dictatorial micromanaging style” and was “highly demotivational” in the way he managed subordinates. Complainant 1 stated, “It’s Buddy’s way or the highway.” He added that Mr. Rizzio tried to “wear people down.” Complainant 1 told us that Mr. Rizzio could “get a little bit vocal and upset.” Complainant 1 stated:

He’s raised his voice with me, and kind of ... brow beating me into, you know, doing it the Buddy way. I mean, I’ve gotten that a couple of times from him. ... call me in the office and kind of, you know, try to brow beat me over some stupid analytic. It’s kind of not very collegial and not a guy I have a lot of trust in. He can be a very nice, charming guy in some ways. But ... he’s kind of an ogre-ish in how he approaches his job and the people around him.

Eight witnesses told us that Mr. Rizzio was a micromanager, including one witness who added that Mr. Rizzio “wanted to review every single product, however mundane it might be.”

Two witnesses stated that Mr. Rizzio was “too nice.” An SIA clarified “too nice” in that Mr. Rizzio would “do the shot across the entire bow” instead of singling out individuals who needed to improve. A second SIA clarified “too nice” in that Mr. Rizzio “lets analysts get away with more than he should.”

Another SIA described Mr. Rizzio as adverse to confrontations. The SIA stated that Mr. Rizzio “tends to make decisions by not making decisions. He just lets issues just sort of simmer without really making an effective organizational decision and that drives people crazy.”

However, several witnesses described Mr. Rizzio as open to ideas and someone who listened to the analysts. For example, an SIA told us that Mr. Rizzio was a very good leader who empowers subordinates to do their jobs. He stated that Mr. Rizzio had been really good to the analysts and always put forward their interests. Another witness told us that Mr. Rizzio was “very for the people, with the people” and “always wanted to, or still does, want to know your opinion.” This witness added that Mr. Rizzio “values your opinion” and “works with you...helping you figure things out.” This witness related that analysts could always go to Mr. Rizzio with a problem.

CCJ2-Wide Communications

While the testimony varied regarding the management styles of the CCJ2 senior leadership, we found a general consensus that communication within the CCJ2 and JICCEN was problematic, and many witnesses attributed the tensions in the CCJ2 to poor communication.

For example, an SIO told us that there was a tremendous amount of miscommunication within the CCJ2 senior intelligence leadership. For instance, the SIO told us that when MG Grove asked for some additional information, Mr. Rizzio would misinterpret MG Grove’s request. The SIO stated “there is no malice in it” but “it’s pretty epic and pervasive.”

An SIA told us that communications was an issue within the command. The SIA said that analysts complained that information was not passed down as it should have been.

Another CCJ2 leader who arrived at USCENTCOM in April 2015 told us that after he arrived to the CCJ2 he held all his meetings in the building where the JICCEN was located. He stated that when he went over to the JICCEN building several individuals asked him what he was doing there and commented that general officers never came over to the JICCEN building.

We describe in more detail the comments regarding the communication problems, and our analysis of it, in the survey results described below and in the Management Processes Part of this report.

CCJ2 Survey Results

In addition to our witness interviews, we examined the results of several broader surveys that included information on the climate among the CCJ2 workforce. We reviewed documents addressing results from the following surveys completed by CCJ2 personnel from 2013 to 2016:

- 2014, 2015, and 2016 ODNI Analytic Objectivity and Process Survey.
- 2013 USCENTCOM Climate Survey.
- 2013, 2014, and 2015 Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey.
- DIA 2016 Leadership Effectiveness Survey.

ODNI Analytic Objectivity and Process Surveys

We first reviewed the ODNI 2014 and 2015 Annual Report to the Congress regarding Analytic Integrity and Standards, which included the ODNI Analytic Objectivity and Process Survey results. We focused on the responses to four of the questions included in the 2014, 2015, and the preliminary 2016 survey results. For each question, the ODNI provided a breakdown by percentages, and for some the number, of respondents that self-identified as members of the Intelligence Community, DoD, combatant commands, and USCENTCOM. The charts below compare responses from each organizations for all three survey years (2014-2016).

For the 2014, 2015, and 2016 Analytic Objectivity and Process Surveys, ODNI reported that 23, 125, and 45 respondents, respectively, self-identified as a member of USCENTCOM.⁸¹

We provide the results to the following four questions that ODNI included on their 2014, 2015, and 2016 Analytic Objectivity and Process Survey:

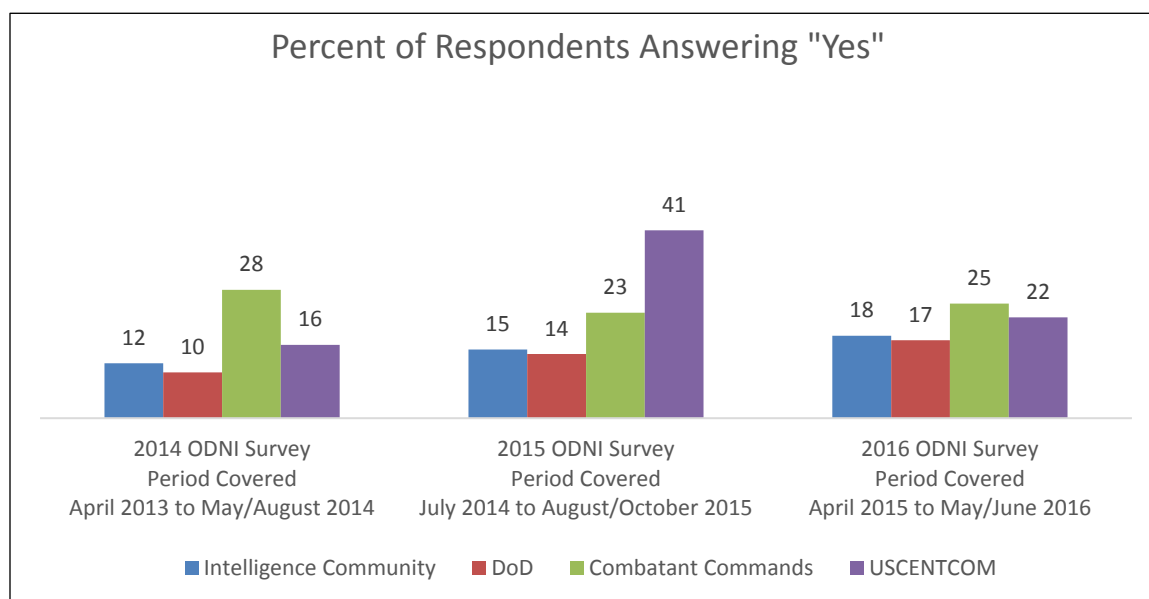
- Has anyone attempted to distort or suppress analysis on which you were working in the face of persuasive evidence? (Chart VI.E.7.1.);
- Did you seek assistance in dealing with the most recent incident of attempted distortion or suppression? (Chart VI.E.7.2.);
- How would you rate your immediate supervisor in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion? (Chart VI.E.7.3.);

⁸¹ ODNI did not place any restrictions or controls on access to the survey and had no controls restricting the number of times an individual could take the survey. The survey did not distinguish respondents within CCJ2 (it did not identify which CCJ2 respondents were within JICCEN). Assuming each respondent represented one distinct CCJ2 military or civilian analyst or manager, the number of respondents represented approximately 2 percent (2014), 11 percent (2015), and 4 percent (2016) of the average CCJ2 assigned strength during each survey window. The ODNI reported that because the survey was voluntary, it could not “definitively conclude on objectivity at the organizational level” or “guarantee that one would observe comparable findings with 100-percent participation.” The ODNI cautioned that care should be taken when broadly interpreting results at the study group level, because the survey methodology did not incorporate procedures to ensure representative samples were selected from each population studied.

- How would you rate mid/senior management within your Intelligence Community element in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion? (Chart VI.E.7.4)

Chart VI.E.7.1. shows a large increase in 2015 for the percentage of USCENTCOM respondents who believed there was an attempt to distort or suppress intelligence analysis.⁸² This was a considerable increase over the previous year. It is important to note, however, that the 41 percent in 2015 represented 45 respondents, which was less than 4 percent of the average number of CCJ2 assigned personnel during the survey window. Likewise, the chart also shows a large decrease in 2016 for the percentage of USCENTCOM respondents (10 respondents in total, or 22 percent) who believed there was an attempt to distort or suppress intelligence analysis. The 2016 percentage is similar to the percentage in other combatant commands, the DoD, and the Intelligence Community.

Chart VI.E.7.1. Has Anyone Attempted to Distort or Suppress Analysis on Which You Were Working in the Face of Persuasive Evidence?



Note: Calculated percentages are based on the total number of respondents answering "Yes" or "No." When calculating response percentages the ODN omitted the response option "Not Applicable to my work role."

We also reviewed USCENTCOM respondents' comments from the 2015 survey related to this question. The survey asked respondents who had answered yes to the question whether "someone had attempted to distort or suppress analysis" to provide a brief description of one incident during the past year where someone attempted to distort or suppress analysis. ODN

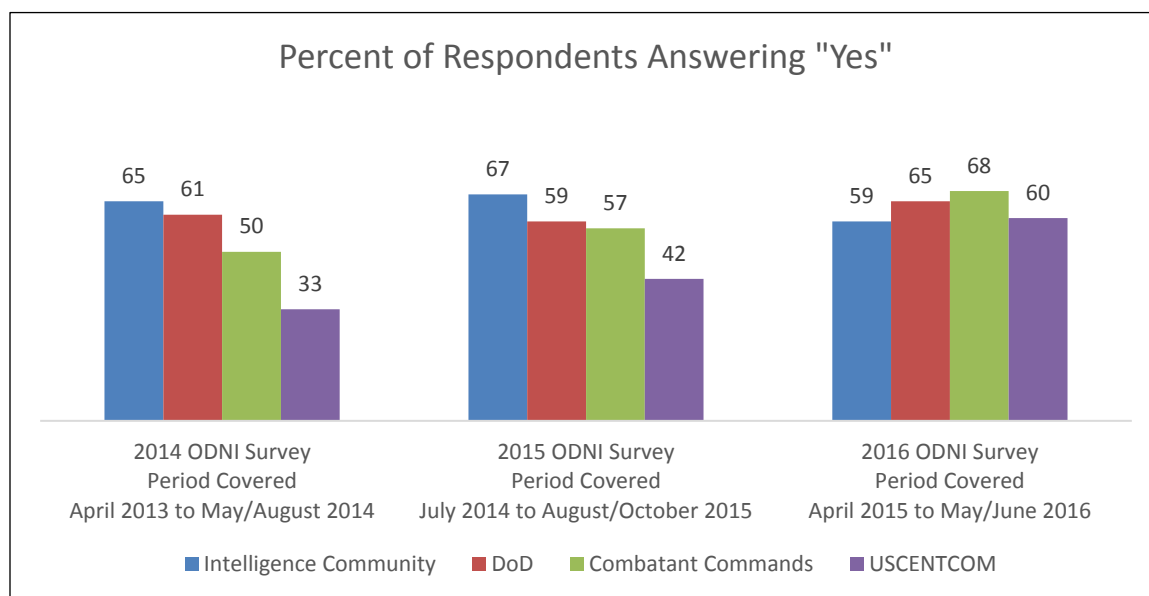
⁸² The percentages account for respondents who answered "yes" or "no" and do not account for respondents who answered "not applicable to my work role."

received 31 comments from the 45 USCENCOM respondents. In the classified report, we provide a few examples of the 31 comments.

We also reviewed USCENCOM respondent's comments from the 2015 survey that asked all the respondents to "describe briefly the procedures, processes, practices, etc. that hinder your ability to produce objective analytic products." ODNI received 40 comments from the 125 USCENCOM respondents. In the classified report, we provide a few examples of the 40 comments.

With regard to the first question, respondents who answered "yes" were then asked whether they sought assistance in dealing with their most recent incident of attempted distortion or suppression. Chart VI.E.7.2 shows a gradual increase from 2014 to 2016 for the percentage of USCENCOM respondents who indicated that they sought assistance with a recent incident of attempted distortion or suppression.

Chart VI.E.7.2. Did You Seek Assistance in Dealing with the Most Recent Incident of Attempted Distortion or Suppression?

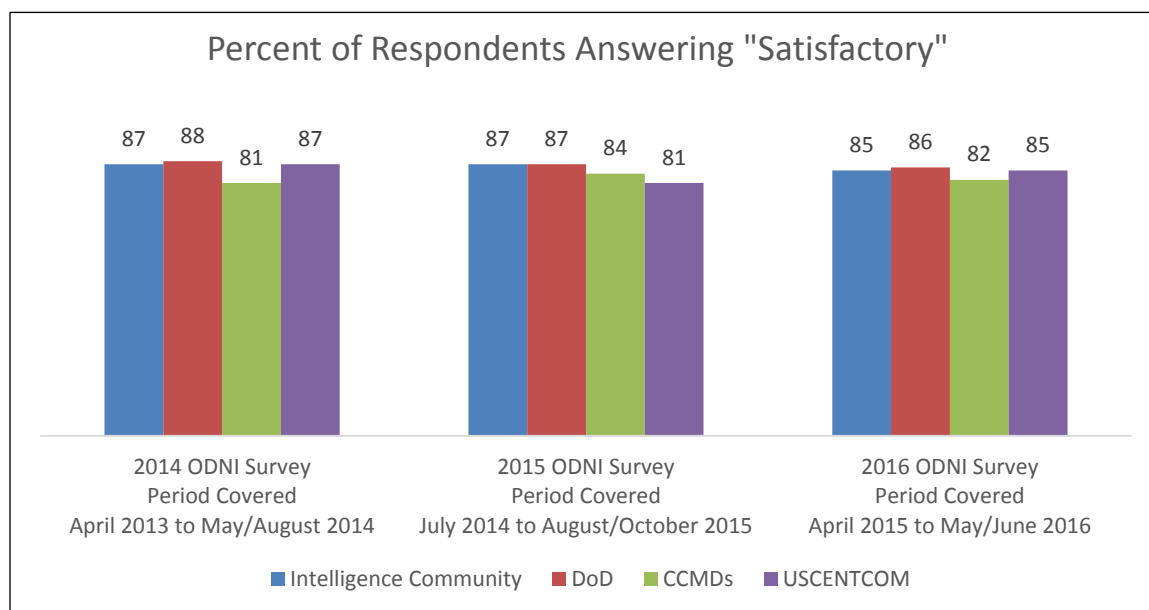


Note: Calculated percentages are based on the total number of respondents answering "Yes" or "No."

Charts VI.E.7.3. and VI.E.7.4. display a comparison of 2014, 2015, and 2016 results by Intelligence Community, DoD, combatant commands, and USCENCOM of respondents who rated their immediate supervisor and mid- and senior-level management as satisfactory in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion.

Chart VI.E.7.3. shows a relatively consistent percentage of respondents who rated their immediate supervisors as satisfactory in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion.⁸³

Chart VI.E.7.3. How Would You Rate Your Immediate Supervisor in Terms of Protecting Analytic Products From Deliberate Distortion?



Note: Calculated percentages are based on the total number of respondents answering “Satisfactory,” “A “mixed performance,” or “Unsatisfactory.” When calculating response percentages ODNI omitted the response option “Insufficient evidence/no opinion.”

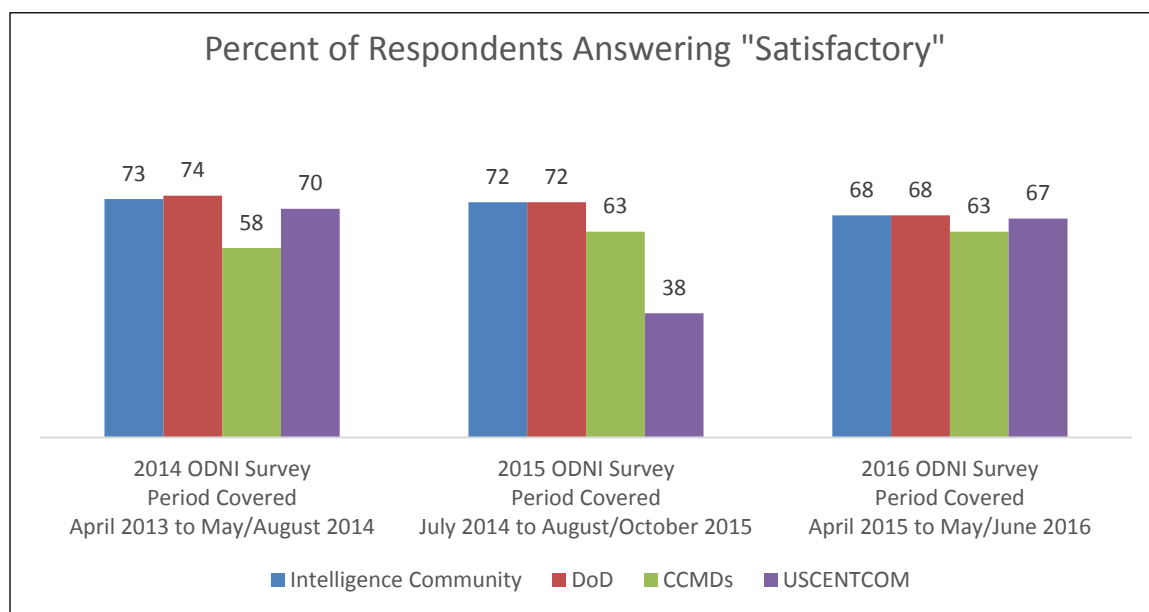
The survey did not ask respondents to provide comments to this question.

Chart VI.E.7.4. shows a large decrease in 2015 for the percentage of USCENTCOM respondents who rated their mid- and senior-level management as satisfactory in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion.⁸⁴ The chart further shows a large increase in 2016 for the percentage of USCENTCOM respondents who rated their mid- and senior-level management as satisfactory in terms of protecting analytic products from deliberate distortion.

⁸³ The percentages account for respondents who answered “satisfactory,” “mixed performance,” or “unsatisfactory” and do not account for respondents who answered “insufficient evidence/no opinion.”

⁸⁴ The percentages account for respondents who answered “satisfactory,” “mixed performance,” or “unsatisfactory” and do not account for respondents who answered “insufficient evidence/no opinion.”

Chart VI.E.7.4. How Would You Rate Mid/Senior Management Within your Intelligence Community Element in Terms of Protecting Analytic Products From Deliberate Distortion?



Note: Calculated percentages are based on the total number of respondents answering "Satisfactory," "A mixed performance," or "Unsatisfactory." When calculating response percentages ODNI omitted the response option "Insufficient evidence/no opinion."

The survey did not ask respondents to provide comments to this question.

2013 USCENTCOM Climate Survey

We also reviewed a PowerPoint summary of the 2013 USCENTCOM Climate Survey results for the JICCEN that were forwarded by the former JICCEN Commander by email to MG Grove in July 2014. We note that this summary compared JICCEN survey results from the 2 years before MG Grove's arrival. USCENTCOM used this survey to assess issues regarding equal opportunity and organizational effectiveness. The summary reflected that 31 percent of JICCEN personnel completed the survey in 2012 and 28 percent completed it in 2013.

The summary noted the negative effects of the increased workload combined with the "trepidation regarding budget and manpower cuts." The summary also identified communication and transparency as areas for improvement. The summary stated that it was "evident respondent employees/analysts are not receiving guidance/priorities/intent intact from senior leadership." The summary indicated that 46 percent of respondents viewed the JICCEN work environment as positive, while 35 percent viewed it as negative, and stated that this reflected a 10-percent decrease from the 2012 survey.

DEOMI Organizational Climate Surveys

USCENTCOM Headquarters also annually participated in the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey, which the DoD requires all commanders of military commands to conduct within 120 days after assuming command and annually thereafter while retaining command. This survey is a tool that allows commanders to assess issues regarding equal opportunity and organizational effectiveness. Employee participation in the survey is voluntary. From 2013 to 2015, the USCENTCOM Chief of Staff requested that the DEOMI conduct a survey of USCENTCOM Headquarters personnel. Each year the DEOMI provided the Chief of Staff a consolidated report of the Headquarters' results as well as separate reports for each staff directorate (J1 through J8) and the Command Group/Special Staff.

In 2013 the CCJ2 DEOMI survey participants consisted of approximately 58 percent of CCJ2 military and civilian personnel, including the JICCENT (DoD guidance prohibits contractors from taking this survey). The 2013 survey focused on discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. However, participants could also comment on organizational effectiveness by responding to a CCJ2 short answer question, "What would be the one thing you would change to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of your organization?" We provide examples of the comments submitted by CCJ2 participants in Table VI.E.7.1. and have divided them in categories similar to the 2014 and 2015 DEOMI surveys described further below.

The CCJ2 and JICCENT were treated as separate elements for the 2014 and 2015 DEOMI surveys.⁸⁵ The questions asked in the 2014 and 2015 DEOMI surveys were broader than the questions asked in the 2013 survey. The 2014 and 2015 DEOMI surveys used 11 climate factors to measure Organizational Effectiveness. We compared the 2014 and 2015 results for both the CCJ2 and JICCENT for the following six climate factors: (1) Trust in Leadership, (2) Organizational Performance, (3) Organizational Cohesiveness, (4) Leadership Cohesiveness, (5) Organizational Processes, and (6) Exhaustion.

The surveys showed an increase in favorable responses across all six climate factors in the CCJ2 from 2014 to 2015. There was a 10-percent increase for five of the six climate factors. The CCJ2's largest increase was 14 percent for "Trust in Leadership." The 2015 JICCENT results also showed an increase in favorable responses of 2 to 10 percent for all six climate factors. Table VI.E.7.2. depicts CCJ2 and JICCENT 2014 and 2015 favorable responses by percentage for each of six climate factors we reviewed.

⁸⁵ Approximately 80 percent (314) of CCJ2 personnel and 50 percent (284) of JICCENT personnel participated in the 2014 Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey. Approximately 52 percent (251) of CCJ2 personnel and 51 percent (251) of JICCENT personnel participated in the 2015 survey.

Table VI.E.7.2. 2014 and 2015 DEOMI Surveys, Select Organizational Climate Factors – Favorable Responses by Percentage

Organizational Climate Factors	CCJ2		JICCEN	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
Trust in Leadership				
Leaders treat members fairly and support their success	50	64	50	60
Organizational Performance				
Organization operates well to accomplish goals and delivers high-quality output when pressured by demanding deadlines	64	74	65	67
Organizational Cohesiveness				
Solidarity in the face of challenges or threats to mission success	71	78	72	74
Leadership Cohesiveness				
Higher-level leaders work together, and support and trust each other	47	60	48	56
Organizational Processes				
Policies and procedures are informed and fair, and leaders seek to achieve goals that are in the members' best interest	56	69	55	63
Exhaustion				
Those who disagreed that they were emotionally, physically, and mentally worn out	54	67	52	56

Table VI.E.7.3. shows the 2014 and 2015 CCJ2 and JICCEN DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey results. The results reflect a favorable increase in CCJ2 and JICCEN personnel who perceived that the overall health of USCENCOM was better than 1 year ago. The survey also reflected a decrease in CCJ2 and JICCEN personnel experiencing a high level of stress. Table VI.E.7.3. provides a comparison of 2014 and 2015 CCJ2 and JICCEN respondents by percentage who agreed or strongly agreed with each listed statement.

Table VI.E.7.3. 2014 and 2015 DEOMI Surveys, Overall Health and Stress – Agree and Strongly Agree by Percentage

Organizational Climate Factors	CCJ2		JICCENT	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
The overall health of USCENTCOM is better now than 1 year ago	45	57	37	52
I experience a high level of stress in the command	62	55	74	65

DIA Surveys

We also examined several surveys conducted by the DIA of USCENTCOM intelligence analysts.

DIA Workforce Engagement Survey

In May 2014, USCENTCOM personnel participated in the DIA Workforce Engagement Survey, an ODNI requirement to obtain workforce feedback on select areas. The CCJ2 summary regarding the 2014 survey indicated that CCJ2 satisfaction ratings were higher than the DIA overall satisfaction ratings. However, the CCJ2 scores had decreased 3 to 9 percent in their lowest scoring areas from the 2013 survey. Table VI.E.7.10. lists a comparison of the overall DIA and CCJ2 satisfaction rating percentages for the CCJ2's lowest scoring key index areas.

Table VI.E.7.10. DIA 2013 and 2014 Workforce Engagement Survey – USCENTCOM
 Respondents Key Index Scores

CCJ2 Lowest Key Index Areas	Satisfaction Rating Percentage			
	CCJ2 2013	CCJ2 2014	DIA-Wide 2013	DIA-Wide 2014
Effective Leadership - Empowerment	43	40	44	40
Performance Based Rewards and Advancement	48	43	47	43
Effective Leadership – Senior Leaders	51	45	49	41
Strategic Management	60	51	55	49
Effective Leadership – Fairness	61	56	59	56
Training and Development	61	56	56	52

DIA 2016 Leadership Effectiveness Survey

In February 2016, for the first time, the DIA surveyed all DIA employees to measure employee perceptions of the leaders in their respective chains of command and to identify training areas for improvement.

The DIA survey used questions that measured employees’ perceptions of leadership and included a free text comment question. In an email dated February 8, 2016, the DIA Chief of Staff asked all DIA-funded civilian, military, and contractor employees to complete the survey. The anonymous survey was open for one week on both SIPRNET and JWICS and allowed respondents to self-identify their directorate, center, or combatant command. The DIA had no controls in place to prevent individuals from completing the survey multiple times. However, duplicate responses from the same IP address were eliminated from the results.

The DIA survey results reflected that 35 percent of USCENTCOM DIA-funded civilian and military respondents completed the survey.

The DIA survey measured leadership effectiveness in terms of six leadership characteristics, Qualified, Trustworthy, Communicative, Motivating, Empowering, and Fair. Table VI.E.7.11. lists a comparison of the DIA and USCENTCOM aggregate percentages of respondents who rated leaders in their chain of command, which included DIA and USCENTCOM leadership, favorably in each of the six leadership characteristics.

Table VI.E.7.11. DIA 2016 Leadership Effectiveness Survey – USCENTCOM Respondents
Chain of Command Ratings

Leadership Characteristic	USCENTCOM All Leadership Levels – includes DIA Leaders (Percent of Respondents Who Agreed)	DIA All Leadership Levels (Percent of Respondents Who Agreed)
Qualified		
_____ has the skills and experience needed to effectively lead.	64	66
Trustworthy		
I have trust and confidence in _____.	61	62
Communicative		
I am satisfied with the information I receive from _____.	53	60
Motivating		
_____ generates a high level of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	51	55
Empowering		
I feel empowered by _____.	45	54
Fair		
Personal favoritism is not tolerated by _____.	48	51

The survey showed that USCENTCOM respondents had more positive perceptions of their team leads or first-line supervisors than for higher-level leaders across five of the six leadership characteristics. Additionally, the survey reflected that USCENTCOM respondents suggested that DIA leaders would benefit most from training in the areas of people management, coaching and developing employees, and communication. These top three USCENTCOM training suggestions were consistent with responses from other DIA organizations.

The DIA survey results included comments provided by USCENTCOM respondents to the question, “What action(s) do you recommend DIA Senior Leadership take to improve DIA leadership at all levels.” We provide examples of the comments in the classified version of the report.

CCJ2 Command Climate Improvements

In our interviews, we were told about actions taken by CCJ2 leadership to improve the command climate since its low point in 2014. For example, it appeared that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman worked to improve command climate issues by trying to improve their communications with the workforce. For instance, on December 4, 2014, Mr. Ryckman held his first monthly brown bag luncheon with GG-15s and in January 2015 also held a brown bag with supervisory GG-14s. In February 2015, MG Grove began holding a series of sensing sessions to address issues raised in the climate surveys.

In January 2015, the CCJ2 created a plan to improve low-scoring areas identified in the 2014 DIA Workforce Engagement Survey. The plan indicated the need for “J2 Up” and “J2 Down” processes. The J2 Up processes called for frequent CCJ2 senior leadership engagement with DIA senior leaders to strengthen networks, influence DIA Human Resources policies and procedures, and raise awareness of similarities and differences between CCJ2 and DIA missions and requirements.

The J2 Down processes called for increased leadership interaction with the workforce through MG Grove’s and Mr. Ryckman’s visits to work areas, quarterly CCJ2 Town Halls and Division/Office All Hands meetings, establishment of senior leader office hours, and senior civilian advisory board meetings to consider workforce issues to include policies and procedures.

A CCJ2 Action Plan Overview dated February 24, 2015, reflected that to improve workforce engagement the CCJ2 was focused on:

- expanding communications with the workforce
- expanding workforce awareness – vision, goals, organization, structure, and accountability
- ensuring meritocracy with the CCJ2
- ensuring dissemination of information regarding training advertisement within the CCJ2
- increasing the workforce sense of belonging

To expand communications with the workforce, the action plan overview reflected that MG Grove had met with division and office chiefs to reinforce zero tolerance of toxic leadership; empowering middle management to act when appropriate; and senior enlisted leader engagements. Additionally, the overview indicated that MG Grove had participated in sensing sessions with CCJ2 personnel and that Mr. Ryckman had met with supervisors in the grade of GG-14 and below and met, on a recurring basis, with GG-15s. The overview also indicated that CCJ2 leadership would expand subject matter expert participation in decision making discussions, and would document and disseminate CCJ2 policies and procedures throughout the CCJ2

workforce to ensure structure, consistency in critical practices, and a method to provide accountability.

To expand workforce awareness, the overview indicated that MG Grove would continue to routinely communicate through CCJ2 division and office chiefs and that the chiefs and lower supervisors, in turn, would provide timely feedback to their subordinates.

To ensure meritocracy within the CCJ2, the overview indicated that the CCJ2 leadership would be more open and transparent regarding employee related actions such as performance appraisals, promotions, and assignment opportunities to include deployments, Joint Duty assignment opportunities, and temporary duty assignment opportunities.

To ensure the dissemination of information regarding training opportunities within the CCJ2, the overview indicated that the CCJ2 leadership would make the workforce aware of internal and external training opportunities and work with the DIA and the greater Intelligence Community to expand training and Joint Duty assignments. Additionally, division and office chiefs would ensure equitable consideration of personnel for internal and external training opportunities.

To increase the workforce sense of belonging, the overview reflected that the CCJ2 leadership would work with their DIA counterparts to convey similarities and differences between DIA and the CCJ2 mission and workforce, and work to update the USCENTCOM-DIA employee support agreement. Additionally, the overview mentioned that many CCJ2 supervisors were uninformed about the span of their responsibilities and uninformed about the cultures of military, civilian, or contractor personnel. The overview recommended consideration of a mandatory class for all military and civilian supervisors to educate them in general supervisory responsibilities, military rank and cultures, and civilian, military, and contractor relations.

Various witnesses also told us that beginning in 2015, both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman increased their presence at the JICCEN building and that their presence was well received.⁸⁶ For instance, in November 2015, Mr. Ryckman established regular office hours 2 days per week inside the JICCEN building to improve analysts' access. Additionally, in October or November 2015, MG Grove began attending daily afternoon meetings at the IFC, which increased his dialogue with analysts.

Mr. Rizzio told us that the command climate had "significantly changed" since January 2015. He related that the change was "gradual." He stated:

⁸⁶ In his response to the preliminary version of this report, MG Grove stated that by late 2015, significantly fewer meetings, changes to the USCENTCOM and CCJ2 battle rhythms, and more "white space" allowed him and Mr. Ryckman to spend more time "to engage the CENTCOM J2 workforce directly."

Leadership is doing everything they can in order to ensure clear, concise guidance and direction is given to allow the J2, and the VJ2, and the analysts to have direct interaction to ensure that the analysts' thoughts, concerns, issues are being addressed to enable them to express their thoughts and ideas. So, I think the command climate had dramatically improved since the height of the ISIL crisis from June [2014] through to early January [2015].

When we interviewed Mr. Rizzio in 2016, he stated that he knew the CCJ2 command climate had improved because he could "see a change in people." Mr. Rizzio added that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman both now have "very good interaction and exchange with analysts." He said that MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman, and the JICCENT Commander all hold routine sensing sessions and town halls with the workforce. Mr. Rizzio told us that he, MG Grove, and Mr. Ryckman all had an open door policy where any analyst could come in and talk. He related that MG Grove's door was open for CCJ2 personnel, "whereas previously it was difficult to get in to see him," because of his "schedule, personality, etcetera."

Mr. Ryckman told us that since 2009 and 2010, command climate surveys reflected "a pretty consistent theme of leadership challenges" concerning "transparency," "communication," and "empowerment." He related that the command was in "crisis mode" and took people who were at a state of crisis and elevated them to a situation in which "now we're really at a state of crisis." He stated he sent out a note in June 2014 to all leaders within the CCJ2 telling them, "Make sure you're taking care of your people. Take care of yourselves. You've got to make sure you're getting your rest. Keep an eye on each other."

Mr. Ryckman told us that they and their staff conducted a review of the 2014 climate survey results. He stated that in January 2015, he and MG Grove conducted a meeting with the division chiefs and the senior enlisted leaders to form a plan to address the issues identified in the survey. He added, "out of that is where we started to change some of what we were doing."

Mr. Ryckman continued:

I had already started those lunches, those working lunches. J2 tried to get to where he was more accessible. We found out somewhere in that process that people didn't think that he had an open door policy and he actually went out and republished his open door policy to make sure people understood he did. ... I think that part of this was the crisis kept us so busy that we, just by nature we had a lot of contact with the small group of people, but not with a larger group of people. The battle rhythm changing and getting more bandwidth allowed us to address some of that.

Mr. Ryckman also stated that during one of his office hours an analyst told him, “I’m really surprised that you’re doing this because I was told you only talk to GG-15s.” He related that the person told him that everyone was told that he (Mr. Ryckman) did not like talking to anyone but GG-15s. Mr. Ryckman continued:

Once somebody says something like that and word goes around,
now you have to prove the negative ... a lot of that was just trying
to overcome what was some false perceptions.

Mr. Ryckman stated that the 2015 climate survey results were “nothing to brag about,” but they did reflect that some things started to resonate. He related that he was “encouraged by, again the office hours I’m doing, the fact that people are coming to bring up issues and have a conversation.” Mr. Ryckman continued:

We’re not going to fix what’s been there for, since really ’09 and
’10 for sure. I don’t have studies from before that. It’s going to
take a while to overcome those. And it’s not unique to here, a lot of
these challenges are occurring across the [Intelligence] Enterprise
as well.

When asked to describe his leadership style, MG Grove stated that he liked to talk to the analysts and hear their opinions and all angles before he made his final decision. He told us that he would like to spend more time with his 1,300 or 1,400 employees, but was not able to do so until recently.

MG Grove told us that he recognized that part of the 2014 climate results was a reflection of the crisis, but he added that USCENTCOM was always in a crisis. He related that at the time no one had “a lot of family life work balance.” He continued that after he received the 2014 survey results he sat down with his Senior Enlisted Leader in December 2014 or January 2015. Additionally, he met with his Division Chiefs in January or February 2015 at an offsite meeting and discussed the issues identified in the survey. He added that after the offsite he had four separate sensing sessions with his division chiefs to discuss the issues. MG Grove stated that he followed the sensing sessions with town hall meetings. He explained that he did a series of town hall meetings, but did not make them mandatory.

MG Grove told us that at one of the sensing sessions he learned that his Executive Officer had miscommunicated his open door policy through email. He related that an employee told him, “I know you’ve got an open door policy, but you basically said don’t come up there because you’re bothering us.” He stated that he corrected the miscommunication.

MG Grove stated that he started doing the sensing session by rank/grade instead of by section where all grade levels were present after someone told him that some people would not

talk to him when their leadership was in the room. He also stated that another thing he tried to do differently to help the command climate was to “be a happy general” by getting over to the JICCEN building and having face-to-face discussions with the analysts. He added that this “cut[s] out that layer of lack of communication” identified in the climate surveys. MG Grove stated that he and Mr. Ryckman were “cutting through that problem.”

MG Grove told us that empowerment, communications, and trust in leadership were the three challenges he had within the CCJ2 and his workforce. He added that the CCJ2 climate survey results for 2010, 2013, 2014, and 2015 were nearly the same. He related that communication was an area the CCJ2 had to constantly work through and “figure out a way to break down.” He stated that communication stopped at the GG-14/GG-15 level and this was what drove him to talk “directly to the teams.”

MG Grove also told us that members of his staff reviewed the 2015 survey statistics and determined trust in leadership, leadership cohesion, accountability, empowerment, and exhaustion were areas that needed improvement. He added that the staff informed him that:

The CCJ2 climate overall seemed to be more positive than last year with the exception of a few enduring issues tied mostly to the unavoidable driving pace of a highly operational tempo environment and inefficiencies across the CENTCOM Directorate which hampers productivity.

Conclusion

The evidence showed that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman inherited a difficult command climate within the CCJ2 when they arrived. There was a stressful environment, a rapid pace of work, workforce reductions, crisis production, and an ambiguous relationship with DIA intelligence analysts assigned to the combatant command.

As reflected in the surveys and the witness testimony, the command climate deteriorated after MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman first arrived at the CCJ2. However, it has improved since the lowest point in 2014. MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman eventually took some positive steps to address command climate issues within the CCJ2, which resulted in improvements in the 2015 and 2016 survey results. However, we also believe that additional improvements can be made in the CCJ2, and we provide specific recommendations regarding such steps in the next section of this report.

VII. DoD OIG's EXAMINATION OF MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Throughout the course of our investigation, we also heard testimony about and examined management processes that relate to the allegations regarding USCENTCOM intelligence. We identified several weaknesses and flaws in the process that we believe contributed to the allegations, as well as the widespread perception that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders were distorting intelligence to present a more positive view of the success of the ISF and a more negative view of the success of ISIL. We also believe these management deficiencies hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of the CCJ2 and JICCEN, as well as the morale of the analytical workforce.

Our review concluded that more effective communication and feedback throughout the organization, improved written policies and guidance, and better application of analytical tradecraft, such as ICD 203's standard of incorporating analysis of alternatives, could have mitigated some of the conflict and concern about CCJ2 and JICCEN intelligence products and analysis, as well as improved the intelligence production process. We discuss these and our recommendations in the following parts of this section:

1. Communication and Feedback,
2. Organizational Change and Priorities,
3. Inconsistency and Ambiguity in the Production and Analytical Review Process,
4. Friendly Force Assessment, and
5. Balance of the Intelligence Effort.

A. Communication and Feedback

During our investigation, we found significant communication problems between CCJ2 leaders and JICCEN leaders, and also within the JICCEN, including barriers to communication and ineffective follow-up and feedback. These deficiencies prevented a shared understanding of why editing changes were made to the analysts' initial products, leading to the widespread perception among analysts producing OIR intelligence products that CCJ2 senior leaders were distorting intelligence. The CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders' attempts to improve communication and feedback in 2015 were only partially effective and too late to fully correct the widespread perception of intelligence distortion, which we believe had formed by the end of October 2014. From the outset of the counter-ISIL intelligence production process, CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders should have increased the quantity and quality of communications with subordinates, especially given the crisis-driven changes in organization and processes. We believe that this was a significant failure of leadership at multiple levels, and it contributed directly to the concerns raised by many analysts.

Barriers to Communication

We found many obstacles to communication inside the CCJ2 and JICCEN that reduced the transparency of changes that CCJ2 leaders made in response to the crisis operations. Many of these communication deficiencies were present prior to June 2014, but the crisis operations and the management style of the new J2 exacerbated the impact of these deficiencies.

The USCENCOM region requires coverage of numerous high-priority intelligence topics (such as terrorism, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and counter-proliferation). These areas require constant and high profile intelligence production. The unrelenting pace of supporting USCENCOM operations in a crisis atmosphere placed heavy demands on CCJ2 leaders and staff. One IFC leader described this, "There's a lot of tired people all the time... You don't come here to kick back." Another JICCEN supervisor described the JICCEN as "a rough organization to be in command climate wise," due to the hard work and long hours. The supervisor stated that there was a "constant sprint and no one takes the 'it's a marathon kind of approach.' So, you're always jumping from one to another. And then those who work hard get more hard work thrown on them."

In addition, one senior analyst described how the JICCEN conversion of many military analysts to predominantly civilian analysts, which occurred prior to 2010, eliminated the organization's periodic "refresh of the workforce like you normally had [when military personnel rotated]." The analyst stated that the civilian analysts had since endured numerous crises, significant personnel reductions, and a civilian furlough that created frustration and fatigue. A senior JICCEN analyst stated that "The summer of 2014 was a continuation of crisis environment here at CENTCOM. Really we never got out of crisis."

USCENCOM command climate survey results from 2013 highlighted the effect of the increased workload combined with "trepidation regarding budget and manpower cuts." Respondents specifically identified communication and transparency as one of the top weaknesses of the organization and that "guidance from top-down and feed back [*sic*] from bottom-up are road blocked." Over half of the respondents believed that leadership explained priorities, plans, and tasks only slightly clearly or not at all. More than one-quarter of the respondents requested increased communication and transparency, "up-down-laterally."

CCJ2 leadership was aware of these issues, although not the full extent of the concerns. Mr. Ryckman told us that “there’s frustration in the workforce on transparency issues, communication issues that have been consistent. If you look at the workforce surveys going back to ’09, empowerment, communication, transparency, and leadership have been there since ’09. I mean, it’s consistently. So, that’s one of the things the J2 and I wanted very hard to try and work on.” We found that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman took steps starting in December 2014 to address transparency and communication issues. However, as discussed later in this report, we did not find that CCJ2 leadership made much initial effort from June 2014 to November 2014 to make improvements. Additionally, we did not find that CCJ2 leadership took effective actions in addressing these challenges from the top on down, until well after a strong perception of distortion had formed and hardened among analysts working on OIR intelligence products.

Prior Leadership and Accountability in JICCEN

Prior to June 2014, supervision was not consistent and effective across JICCEN analytic branches and divisions. A major complaint evidenced in organizational climate surveys from 2012 to 2015 was that some leaders at the GG-14 and GG-15 levels did not confront and correct under-performing analysts. One division leader stated that “there has been limited to no accountability, almost no adult supervision when it comes to tradecraft analysis, until relatively recently.”

Mr. Rizzio served in the JICCEN since 2010, working with several JICCEN Commanders during his tenure. An analyst with years of experience at USCENCOM said he “personally encouraged [Mr. Rizzio] to be a little harder on people who he thinks aren’t doing their job correctly. But I think sometimes he feels he can’t do that. I don’t really understand that.” Another senior intelligence analyst described him as “very personal, approachable” prior to June 2014, but by August 2014, “he was getting a lot of pressure from the leadership above him.”

Moreover, before June 2014, analysts from some branches operated independently. One division supervisor noted, “they would have direct access [to Mr. Rizzio], they would circumvent this organization at will, every day. There was no oversight, there was no discipline. There was no analytic rigor at this level, division level, over these processes ... and they never had [division scrutiny] before.” For instance, according to a branch leader, one branch published routine reports without collaborating with other JICCEN branches or submitting it for a complete tradecraft review. This undermined teamwork, information sharing, and cooperation.

Physical and Organizational Obstacles to Communication

Both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman physically worked at the USCENTCOM headquarters building, which also housed the USCENTCOM Commander. Although an adjacent building housed the JICCENT, security measures made this a 10-minute trip one way from the headquarters building. In addition, their daily events with the USCENTCOM leaders and staff limited opportunities for MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman to visit the JICCENT area in person and communicate directly or build trust with subordinate analysts. Moreover, the evolving counter-ISIL campaign increased MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman's meeting schedule and time demands inside the headquarters building further reduced the frequency of visits in favor of video teleconferences. In-person visits were limited to only a few days a week and for short periods at the IFC. During the beginning of the counter-ISIL campaign, some JICCENT personnel were spread across shift schedules (3 days on/3 days off) and detailed to the IFC. It was difficult to communicate with all JICCENT employees except by email. Additionally, since most J2 visits were to the small percentage of analysts in the IFC, MG Grove's and Mr. Ryckman's personal interaction was with a relatively small number of analysts.

Newcomers and Initial Impressions

Both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman arrived at USCENTCOM as the counter-ISIL campaign began in 2014 and did not conduct normal introductions. We found no evidence that MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman held an early briefing to meet JICCENT analysts; to explain their background, expectations, and imperatives; or to issue initial guidance.

Because some JICCENT employees knew Mr. Ryckman from his previous tours at USCENTCOM, they knew to expect that he would be extremely analytical and detail-oriented. However, few had personal experience with MG Grove. Consequently, many employees gauged MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman on their initial impressions.

Many witnesses describe MG Grove as abrasive, intense, or cautious. For example, Mr. Rizzio noted that both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman took a different approach than previous CCJ2 leaders. He said that they were very involved with production, "were risk adverse, and didn't delegate certain things. They also were perfectionists." He said that MG Grove was impatient at times and "the way he interacted with the workforce...stifled communications." Another SIO described MG Grove's demeanor early in the crisis as:

Both he and Greg Ryckman were so overwhelmed that it really came across being terse and that at times they, it came across as being aggressive ... All I saw was somebody who was very direct, looking for very direct responses to the questions he was asking and frankly ... [which seemed] reflective of some of the questions and the directions ... that he was getting from General Austin.

One senior analyst described his initial impression of MG Grove compared to previous J2s “[who would] call you on the phone or they would at least know who you were. [MG Grove is] not that kind of guy. He’s very hands off ... when it comes to interacting with the analysts. I’ve had a little more interaction with him lately. ... So it’s brought me in a little bit closer proximity but that’s only been a recent occurrence.” Another JICCENT leader noted that “he’s initially very kind of closed off and cautious, but as he gets to know folks he kind of warms up.”

Between June 2014 and late 2015, J2 senior leaders interacted with select leaders, IFC analysts, and approved briefers during briefing rehearsals, morning meetings, and through email. However, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman had less interaction with other JICCENT personnel. Those with more frequent contact with MG Grove found him different after more interaction. One SIO stated, “The General Grove that people described to me is not at all the individual that I interact with.” This same person had heard of his intense scrutiny and then directly experienced it:

I was prepped when I went to brief the J2 because...he was meticulous about sourcing. He wanted to know [which sources provided the information]. And so when I would go brief him I had that level of detail for every single thing I briefed him on. Sometimes he had questions, but in general there was that level of scrutiny was not applied to the briefings that I was giving. So I was actually quite surprised because I had this image in my head of what it was going to be like to be an [brief him] on this problem set and had the complete opposite experience. I think – I have seen analysts get questioned, their assumptions be questioned. They get frazzled. I personally think it comes down to how much confidence the leadership has in the information that you’re delivering and your, quite frankly your diligence as either an analyst or [a manager].

MG Grove told Mr. Rizzio that he expected products to be both perfect and on time. JP 2-0 states, “By its nature intelligence is imperfect.” MG Grove’s expectation did not help his relationship and communications with Mr. Rizzio or the JICCENT. Leaders and analysts describe “intense scrutiny” by MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman, which increased stress, reduced dialogue, decreased CCJ2 leaders’ approachability, and added friction to the product review process.

It also caused CCJ2 personnel to recognize that the leaders valued high-confidence assessments. Although both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman do not describe themselves as demanding only high-confidence assessments, that perception endured and had a limiting effect. As one senior intelligence analyst explained:

[People] backed away from things that they probably should have been more forward leaning on. What I would tell you is Mr. Rizzio very clearly said that the J2 and VJ2 want high confidence assessments. High confidence assessments within the intel community is pretty much history telling, because it means it has to have already occurred effectively. You can't lean forward with a high confidence assessment. High confidence statement is something, again, that's historic in nature ... so if your burden of proof is higher and if the expectation is that you're going to have a high confidence assessment that in of its own right, does a lot of things that frankly are a disservice to the intel writ large.

Missed Opportunities

MG Grove did not publish or describe his vision and philosophy for the CCJ2 and JICCEN until between November and early December 2014. He also did not publish his "open-door policy" until March 30, 2015. Even when his open door policy was originally disseminated, an email from MG Grove's executive officer seemed to discourage employees from taking advantage of this policy. MG Grove learned of this email through a 2015 climate survey, and he re-sent the open door policy October 5, 2015. Additionally, the CCJ2 and JICCEN did not conduct any formal after-action reviews prior to January 2015.

Early on, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not communicate well with analysts, and they seemed unaware of how their actions and words were perceived. One IFC leader described both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman as initially "argumentative" with analysts, but "after three or four months of them getting to know me and us having interactions and consistently demonstrating that I know what I'm talking about ... it's been much easier conversation." Another analyst described the first impression of MG Grove as "gruffer" than his predecessor, and "not the least easy to talk to," but "he's not actually as difficult to work with as he seemed at first." After this analyst "gave a few briefs and he began to trust me and then it was fine. So, he's easier to work with if he trusts you. Which I think is true for all of us."

The initial impressions and uncertainty about MG Grove's outlook and actions affected the workforce's perceptions of his actions. MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman also opted not to explain their approach and standards to all JICCEN employees, which was a chance to prevent, detect, and correct misperceptions shaped by what analysts witnessed and what they learned second-hand.

Due to these communication problems, individual leadership styles, and limited time to interact with JICCEN analysts, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not establish initial mutual trust with many JICCEN analysts and leaders. This contributed to the perception that they had intentionally distorted intelligence to impose a pre-ordained narrative.

We noted some improvement in the CCJ2 leaders' attempts to communicate with the workforce and establish better trust over time. Mr. Ryckman began brown bag lunch sessions with analysts in December 2014. After February 2015, MG Grove began to hold sensing sessions and town halls, which improved dialogue. In late 2015, both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman increased their presence at the JICCEN building. In November 2015, Mr. Ryckman established regular office hours 2 days per week inside the JICCEN building to improve analysts' access. In October or November 2015, MG Grove began attending daily afternoon meetings at the JICCEN IFC, which increased his dialogue with analysts. These steps helped analysts better understand his scrutiny of products although they did not fully compensate for lost opportunities to build trust and relationships with others. These changes were too late because the perceptions of an intentional effort to distort intelligence were already formed and hardened.

Recommendation (Barriers to Communication)

1. USCENTCOM intelligence leaders should find ways to sustain a reasonable presence at the JICCEN and to provide direct feedback, especially during crisis work. CCJ2 leadership should continue to implement methods to communicate with the entire workforce across work locations and shifts, such as brown bag lunches, town halls, anonymous suggestion boxes (physical or virtual), and sessions with analysts, immediate supervisors, and middle managers.

Ineffective Feedback and Follow-up. A 2014 JICCEN command climate survey respondent succinctly summarized much of the communications problem: "Decisions are not transparent and logic for major decisions is not communicated to the workforce." MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman used a hierarchical communication method, which relied on intermediate leaders to relay guidance and feedback on products to subordinate analysts working across various shifts. While the crisis pace limited J2 leaders' regular interaction with the JICCEN, they still needed to make a greater effort to explain the basis for some of their changes and their expectations to verify that intermediate leaders understood their guidance and intent and to ensure that they had communicated it effectively.⁸⁷

After the arrival of MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman and the onset of the counter-ISIL campaign, the JICCEN underwent many procedural and organizational changes, including

⁸⁷ In their responses to our preliminary report, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman wrote that they relied on subordinate leaders to ensure effective communication throughout the JICCEN. In some cases, this can be an appropriate technique for an organization of this size. However, in July 2014, the previous JICCEN Commander presented MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman with the 2013 USCENTCOM climate survey results that highlighted the communication and feedback problems within the JICCEN (including that guidance and feedback from senior leaders to analysts was not being received "intact"). We recognize that there were a few mid-level managers in the JICCEN who worked on OIR products who may have contributed to the communication problems. However, this did not relieve senior leaders of the responsibility to take effective action to build trust and address these problems in a timely way.

greater scrutiny of counter-ISIL products; reorganization of the Near East Division; activation of the Intelligence Fusion Center; and evolving guidance on product format, sourcing, approval authority, and official coordination. Many changes occurred abruptly, and leaders at all levels did not fully explain the reasons to employees. Better feedback and communication could have helped to reduce some misunderstandings and concern about the basis and rationale for the changes, and increased shared understanding.

For example, MG Grove's predecessor did not exercise centralized control over the review and approval of intelligence products. According to a JICCENT senior leader, unlike many previous J2s, the previous J2 sometimes saw slides for the first time when they were briefed to him and the CCJ3 at a morning briefing. For example, a division leader stated that prior to June 2014, the Iraq Branch and the Levant Branch "operated independently of one another and independently of their counterparts in [other divisions] ... they just didn't respond to [their] division leadership, and that division leadership at the time was fine with that and just sort of obfuscated responsibility to make sure that analytic products were coordinated and synchronized."

As noted previously, MG Grove wanted higher confidence assessments, and according to a senior intelligence officer, he stated several times, "I don't care about being first with the truth, I want to be right with the truth." MG Grove also reviewed all products that went to GEN Austin. Some analysts did not understand or appreciate the increased scrutiny, as their previous work had been deemed sufficient. When MG Grove began to review crisis products, he noted that JICCENT was accustomed to producing more strategic products and was less familiar with developing more-tactical products. He was also aware that products had great visibility outside of USCENTCOM, and he wanted everyone to focus more on sourcing and relevance.

Although some witnesses told us that the rigorous review process was needed due to some weakness in tradecraft and quality of writing, other witnesses believed that the CCJ2 leadership should trust the analysts and not be involved in the editing process. However, CCJ2 and JICCENT leaders did not make sufficient effort to explain why changes were necessary. They also did not verify that subordinates uniformly understood them.

In addition, while CCJ2 leaders did provide some feedback on individual products to JICCENT leaders and briefers during face-to-face rehearsals or over video teleconference and email, the feedback did not trickle down through management layers to reach analysts across shifts. The feedback that did occur often happened just prior to or after a briefing, when the focus was on making corrections under pressure. This also was at the end of that briefer's duty day, and the feedback was often not adequately understood or conveyed to everyone, including the analysts on different shifts who had contributed to the product. Rather, JICCENT leaders used daily emails called "Night Orders" to convey guidance and priorities. While analysts who were not present when the guidance was originally issued could scrutinize these to attempt to

understand the reasons for changes to their products, these night orders were not as effective as direct explanations for the changes. When reviewers saw the same problems in products re-occur, frustration increased on all sides.

One JICCENT senior intelligence officer described how this scrutiny and editing early in the counter-ISIL campaign had lasting effects, feeding into “fears and concerns ... and people ... started shutting down.” One symptom of this was a reluctance to face questions from CCJ2 leaders on all details of a topic, resulting in analyst self-censorship. This senior leader described this as:

[Some analysts] started sidestepping [details] because it wasn't worth their time because they had been beaten up so badly during the first 6 months ... that it wasn't worth it ... [and] we have dumbed down the overall understanding of certain things ... [and later] when we come forth and say ... this has just emerged ... [it is new to the audience] and seems out of the blue..

In late 2015, CCJ2 leaders began consistent daily feedback sessions at the IFC, which was a helpful and needed change.

Reasons to Exclude a Product from a Brief or Read Book. Another source of frustration was when analysts put significant effort into an intelligence product and CCJ2 leaders would withhold a product from a briefing or the Commander's Read Book without explaining the reasons for their decision. For JICCENT analysts, getting their products into the read book was viewed as “the gold standard” of successful analysis, so they wanted an explanation of why the product was delayed or not included. They often did not receive any clear feedback.

One experienced JICCENT supervisor asserted that junior analysts face a dilemma in “that they operate in a flat information domain. It's very flat, unregulated, uncontrolled, emails everywhere, direct collaboration all over JWICS, SIPR, NIPR [various communications networks]. But the decision making process – the organization is still hierarchical and vertical.” He asserted that when their products are not approved and included, they lack the perspective and the seasoning to accept that there may be very good reasons for the leader's decision. Instead, they “assert that, ‘I am being ignored. Nobody is paying attention to my assessments,’ and you know that's ... a no win situation. The rules ... [by which you] must play you can't win, you can't know the rules.” This illustrates the need to communicate the rationale for decisions on the intelligence products.

Leaders could have various reasons for excluding a product, including available briefing time, classification, and relevance. Often this feedback was not provided to the analyst. Only the Deputy J2 for Support and the JICCENT Commander were present when MG Grove selected which products would be put into the normal read book and those that he would present to

GEN Austin in a small group. Subordinate leaders and analysts could not directly observe this, but neither MG Grove nor those in attendance regularly relayed the results of his decision or reasons to the original analysts.

Senior intelligence leaders may have access to information through travel or discussions with partners, or from highly controlled classified information sources which cannot be shared with junior analysts, and may contravene analysis based on conventional sources. A senior intelligence officer asserted that analysts “get challenged that they think they’re seeing everything, but they don’t see everything. They’re not privy to a lot of the things that the J2, or Commander, or Mr. Ryckman have eyes only on or stuff like that ... [which causes] a different point of view than what the analyst is seeing.”

Addressing Analysts’ Concerns. When JICCENT and CCJ2 leaders learned that some analysts believed they were changing assessments for political reasons, they did not respond in a direct or transparent manner. The lack of transparency on decisions analysts deeply cared about caused some of them to consider other, more damning reasons, for the editing or exclusion of products from the read book.

For example, as discussed in the section of this report on alleged distortion, in a meeting in October 2104 with Mr. Rizzio and Mr. Ryckman, analysts voiced concerns they were only allowed to present good news stories. Both Mr. Ryckman and Mr. Rizzio made statements discounting the allegations and reminding them that MG Grove had the prerogative to require additional evidence for their conclusions. Some attendees saw this as the leaders not taking their concerns seriously. Following Mr. Ryckman’s departure from the meeting, one analyst raised the allegation that CCJ2 leaders were “cooking the books.” Mr. Rizzio then told the attendees that they needed to be “on board” with the new J2 approach.

Later, the JICCENT Commander did ask personnel in some JICCENT focus groups to provide any evidence of changing intelligence, but he said he did not receive any specific examples. However, the JICCENT Commander also told us he informed MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman on 8 to 10 occasions that analysts perceived that there was an imposed narrative. The JICCENT Commander stated:

I raised it with both the VJ2 and the J2, both Mr. Ryckman and General Grove that these perception were out there and we were trying to combat them. And so they knew absolutely. Mr. Ryckman had come over a couple of times to talk to the analysts, because he knew there was kind of general dissatisfaction. And kind of talk them through it. But again, it helped at the moment, but then over time it was just a continuous kind of management, leadership challenge.

We asked the JICCENT Commander what he told MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman. The JICCENT Commander stated:

Yeah, I described it, "some of the analysts were concerned about word choices, about a false narrative, about enforced storyline," those type of things. I don't think I used [the] word "cooking the books." But that these kind of things were being discussed in the workforce and that we were trying to address them. But I [wanted] to make sure the J2 was aware of those type of things.

We asked the JICCENT Commander what MG Grove's and Mr. Ryckman response was, and the JICCENT Commander stated:

They understood, and they kind of reiterated the points I did. The issue is not providing a narrative. The issue is the consistency of the storylines in the same [manner] that I've described to you.

In another meeting in May 2015 Mr. Rizzio and analysts discussed the perception that senior leaders were "cooking the intel books." Mr. Rizzio told the analysts that he did not consider their explanations to be sufficient, and that the problem was their writing and documentation of supporting evidence. One attendee of the meeting told us Mr. Rizzio stated, "Well, if you want, I'm not going to take your issues to the J2, but I'll definitely deliver a letter or set up a meeting with you and the J2. If you want to address the stuff directly with the J2."

According to Mr. Rizzio, he told MG Grove in May 2015, before his May 29, 2015, meeting with analysts that "this is the worst command climate I've seen in this organization since I've been involved with it, and they think you two are cooking the books." He added, "and he was stunned." MG Grove told us he did not remember this conversation and said that the JICCENT Commander raised this issue with him "one time and it was not specific" and that no one else raised concerns to him. He also stated that if "somebody brought it to my attention and I have an open door policy, had somebody come in and said, 'I need to talk to you point to point. I feel like you're covering up intelligence and I'm bringing this to you.' I would've taken action."

Yet both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not fully grasp the extent of the belief among some analysts about distortion and their concerns. They should have. Mr. Ryckman described his meeting with analysts in October 2014 in which the analysts discussed concerns as "a heated meeting." Additionally, a JICCENT leader stated that Mr. Ryckman called him in the December 2014-January 2015 timeframe, and told him that "[Mr. Ryckman] and Mr. Rizzio had had a previous discussion where Mr. Rizzio conveyed to Mr. Ryckman that a lot of the analysts felt that we were cooking the books for intelligence." The witness then went to Mr. Ryckman's office, and Mr. Ryckman asked him "Do you think we are cooking the books?" After the

witness told Mr. Ryckman why analysts might have this perception, the witness stated that “to my recollection [Mr. Ryckman] did not say anything in response, other than maybe nodding in understanding.” This indicates that at least Mr. Ryckman should have been aware of analysts’ perceptions of the altering of intelligence to support a narrative by January 2015.

Moreover, MG Grove told us the JICCEN Commander only informed him on one occasion of analyst concerns and it was “not specific” However, we believe that he was informed several times about the concerns. Moreover, we believe that even a single instance alone should have raised alarms with MG Grove or Mr. Ryckman.

Yet, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not take effective action to address the concerns regarding the perceived manipulation of intelligence, and they did not take steps to inquire into them further. This lack of an appropriate response to analysts’ concerns added to some analysts’ belief that intelligence was being altered. It also gave the appearance that CCJ2 leaders were unconcerned.

In short, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not communicate effectively, did not fully appreciate the inadequate communication and feedback within JICCEN, and did not address widespread concerns about distorted intelligence. In the absence of feedback, facts, and explanations, many analysts attributed improper motivations for changes to the intelligence products and CCJ2 processes. They saw changes from a skeptical perspective and the concerns spread.

Recommendations (Ineffective Feedback and Follow-up)

2. CCJ2 leaders should communicate feedback, guidance, and intent in a variety of techniques and settings, and verify that the message is reaching the analysts. Leaders should also verify that their direction was received and understood.

3. CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders should provide guidance for subordinates to raise any ethical dilemmas or suspected improprieties. Leaders should communicate this to new arrivals and periodically reinforce with their entire force. They should also consider developing anonymous means, such as email, suggestion box, or Ombudsman, for analysts to raise concerns about analytical integrity.

4. The CCJ2 should implement after-action reviews with JICCEN analysts and intermediate managers to professionally assess intelligence production, provide feedback, and identify ways to improve.

B. Organizational Change and Priorities

Personnel Reductions

In the classified report, this section discusses personnel reductions affecting civilian and military personnel at JICCENT during FY10-17. The number of contractor personnel was also greatly reduced.

Among the side effects of these reductions are reduced intelligence production capacity and increased uncertainty about employees' long-term employment. Moreover, JICCENT used to rely on contractors for a significant amount of production, especially during crises and the need for surge capacity. As contractors were reduced, civilian and military employees provided a greater percentage of production than in the past. Because there were fewer available analysts, including contractors who arrived already trained, JICCENT had less available time to train its military and civilian employees while maintaining production.

Shift to Crisis Production

As the counter-ISIL campaign began in 2014, portions of JICCENT switched from the routine products, such as papers focusing on long-term predictions, to products supporting the tactical war operations. Normally, a combatant command's subordinate unit's headquarters intelligence staff would produce intelligence at a tactical level to support planning and execution of battles, targeting, engagement, and other joint activities. Tactical intelligence is more detailed, fast-paced, and often includes precise threat location, tracking individuals and groups, targeting, and post-attack assessment. For example, tactical intelligence would inform a commander on which targets would affect the threat's ability, detect and pinpoint those targets for a ground or air capability to engage them, and then assess what threat capability remained following the operation.

Because no subordinate joint task force existed at the onset of the counter-ISIL campaign, JICCENT assumed the lead for this intelligence. However, according to several witnesses, it was not well organized, trained, or adequately equipped to provide such tactical intelligence over a long period. This change in focus also led to changes to product types, analytical focus, and terminology. For example, JICCENT began an accelerated daily production cycle featuring intelligence summaries and analysis produced over hours instead of weeks, shorter period of coverage (last 24 hours and next 48 to 96 hours), and greater level of details and supporting evidence to support targeting. This different analytical perspective was new and unfamiliar for some JICCENT analysts.

As the counter-ISIL campaign matured, more personnel needed to work together to support targeting, intelligence collection, and analysis. According to an IFC senior leader,

because the existing branch workspace could not support a larger watch floor, including targeting personnel, the J2 decided to activate the IFC between June and July 2014.

Moreover, USCENTCOM had faced a pressing operational tempo and few lulls since 2001, which made it difficult to update J2 and JICCEN Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and policies. While JICCEN had used the IFC concept for previous exercises and crises, as recently as 2012, the implementation and composition of each IFC varied based on the mission or crisis. The base concept was outlined in a January 2014 JICCEN Crisis SOP, but it was generic, untested, and largely not understood by JICCEN employees.

Activation of the Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC)

On or about June 20, 2014, JICCEN activated the IFC. This was both a crisis organization to provide intelligence support to the counter-ISIL campaign and a dedicated workspace at USCENTCOM. The IFC included both analysis and targeting experts. However, after the IFC's activation, its structure changed over time. More importantly, the CCJ2 issued no written document, such as an execution order, to supplement the Crisis SOP, to specifically direct IFC activation, or to provide guidance and instructions such as delineating branch and IFC responsibilities or setting changes in production priorities.

JICCEN initially selected personnel from existing JICCEN structure to be detailed to the IFC, usually for 30- to 90-day periods. Led by an Army lieutenant colonel, analysts manned the IFC in shifts of up to 40 personnel, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. All IFC personnel came from existing branches, which reduced the capacity and expertise in those branches, especially given the force reductions since 2010. While the IFC's Regional Intelligence Cell was supposed to complete some production on its own, it relied on standing JICCEN structure (geographic and functional branches) to provide input for some crisis products. Although IFC employees managed to support the crisis sufficiently in the first 90 days, the stress of shiftwork, increased scrutiny, and changes continued to build up and erode morale and trust.

In October 2014, USCENTCOM began to establish the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters for OIR, which allowed IFC to eventually reduce shifts to 15 people as more intelligence responsibilities migrated to this subordinate CJTF. However as the IFC mission, organization, and procedures changed, leaders did not capture lessons learned or update the Crisis SOP.

While the CCJ2 and JICCEN provided intelligence support to the counter-ISIL campaign, their traditional and demanding intelligence duties and responsibilities related to other areas did not diminish. The JICCEN still needed to provide intelligence for other countries in its area of responsibility, which competed for leader time and focus. While this other production

continued, the CCJ2's increased focus on analytical rigor strained JICCEN's ability to review routine products, leading to bottlenecks and slower approval of products.

Reorganization During Crisis

In June 2014, the JICCEN Near East Division had three branches, Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, Levant, and Iraq. Because counter-ISIL intelligence crossed branch boundaries, the Near East Division was reorganized in January 2015 to consolidate support to OIR. The CCJ2 created the Near East Division, which was composed of the Iraq Branch, Levant Branch, and the Middle East Extremist Branch. This reorganization also placed two GG-15 positions to the Near East Division headquarters to perform additional product reviews. To many analysts, this structure was another abrupt change, and CCJ2 leaders did not fully explain its rationale for the change.

During these two big changes in its organization in under 6 months, JICCEN employees had to adapt to an additional mission with an unfamiliar tactical scope, the new IFC organization and shift work, and reduced manning. Moreover, some of the existing branches that provided personnel had to perform additional work to contribute toward IFC production while maintaining their regular production. Procedures and processes were not clear, there were no official orders for the IFC activation or Near East Division reorganization, and there was little time to update written guidelines, such as SOPs. Again, CCJ2 leaders made little effort to explain the reasons for these organizational changes, and some analysts interpreted the reorganization as a calculated move to add additional layers to impose a narrative on the analytical products. Without adequate explanation and communication, these perceptions continued to spread.

Recommendations (Organizational Changes)

5. USCENCOM should update and maintain its JICCEN standard operating procedures to ensure that they accurately reflect current JICCEN manning and organizational changes, and that they identify the IFC mission, roles, and responsibilities in crisis operations. The procedures should include any differences for crises, including product review procedures or production priorities.

6. USCENCOM should communicate the reasons for organizational changes, such as the activation of the IFC, so that they are understood by JICCEN employees.

7. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should provide an overview of the Intelligence Fusion Center and Crisis SOP concepts to new employees to better prepare them for contingencies.

8. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should provide training for employees identified to serve in IFC on crisis procedures, including product lines and review process.

9. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should conduct, record, and follow-up on after-action reviews for each IFC activation or exercise.

10. JICCEN should consider developing analyst exchanges with other intelligence organizations to increase familiarity with tactical intelligence production and requirements.

C. Inconsistency and Ambiguity in the Production and Analytical Review Process

Organizational Identity at JICCEN

During our interviews in this investigation, a significant number of analysts who identified themselves as DIA employees believed that USCENCOM was a member of the Intelligence Community. However, USCENCOM is not a member of the Intelligence Community.⁸⁸ The ambiguous status of the DIA employees detailed to the CCJ2 also created confusion over which analytical standards applied to their intelligence production. Many leaders and analysts also exhibited uncertain understanding of how ICD standards and joint doctrine, including JP 2-0 and DIA publications such as Tradecraft Notes, applied to their production of USCENCOM intelligence products, as well as the role and authorities of the J2 in the intelligence process. Even MG Grove, who had recently worked with a JIOC in Korea, was not sure whether ICD standards applied to him:

that's a really good question. I don't want to say they don't, because ... This is an interesting discussion ... my organization is really not part of the Intelligence Community. ... We're part of the DoD Intelligence Enterprise. So, I think it has applicability. I think the DIA regulation has some, but I don't know that I'm completely governed by the ICD.

As outlined in the 2006 CJCS Execution Order for JIOCs, the DIA provides analysts in direct support to combatant commanders.⁸⁹ JP 1-02 defines direct support as a "mission requiring a force to support another specific force and authorizing it to answer directly to the supported force's request for assistance." DIA civilian analysts assigned or attached to combatant command JIOCs support that commander through the J2, who can tailor this support to meet USCENCOM's warfighting requirements.

DIA Director LtGen Stewart told us that his DIA civilian analysts at USCENCOM are "aligned under the COCOM [combatant command] to satisfy their current and near term intelligence requirements," that their customer is the USCENCOM Commander, and that "they get their day-to-day tasking ... from the Commander through the J2 at the combatant command."

⁸⁸ See JP 2-0, III.1.b and b(1). Military members are four defense agencies: DIA, NSA, NRO, NGA; and four Service intelligence organizations, Army intel/CI, AFOSI, NCIS, & MCIA. Combatant commands are outside the Intelligence Community.

⁸⁹ CJCS, "Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD), 031640Z APR 06. DIA analysts who are assigned or attached to combatant command Joint Intelligence and Operations Centers (like the JICCEN) are in direct support of the combatant commander. Available on SIPRNET.

A 2011 modification of the CJCS Execution Order for JIOCs⁹⁰ also directed that “JIOCs will conduct all-source intelligence analysis in accordance with accepted DOD and IC methods and standards.” Furthermore, JP 2-0 requires defense producers of all-source intelligence to meet ICD 203 standards.

Although combatant commands are not members of the Intelligence Community, the DIA is. Moreover, the intelligence effort at combatant commands informs the Intelligence Community, as well as the President. Examples include monitoring international situations and updating and developing strategic estimates to support military plans. This is a benefit, although not the primary mission (which is to support the combatant commander’s intelligence requirements). When operations commence, JIOCs must focus more on the USCENTCOM Commander’s and subordinate units’ intelligence needs, such as focusing on greater details needed to support joint campaigns, targeting, and warning on imminent threats to forces and changes in the operational environment.

The DIA civilian analysts assigned to combatant command JIOCs are hired, in-processed, paid, administered, trained (including sustainment training), and professionally developed by the DIA. The DIA also provides follow-on assignments for career progression, as well as relocation opportunities for any employees whose position is eliminated during manpower reductions.

LtGen Stewart stated, “I am in theory responsible for the DIA employees that are assigned to the combatant commands to ensure tradecraft standards, analytic tradecraft and standards are adhered to, that they’re organized, trained, and equipped to support the combatant commanders and any other customers that we support across the Enterprise.”

According to a CCJ2 staff director, the DIA publishes Tradecraft Notes as authoritative documents on how to apply analytic standards. The DIA teaches courses both at DIA headquarters and at USCENTCOM’s Regional Joint Intelligence Training and Education Facility that cover analysis, writing, briefing, analytical standards, and tradecraft. On-line DIA courses are also available on a variety of analytical tradecraft. During 2014 to April 2016, the DIA required that all DIA employees take an 8-week course on the foundations of analysis, to be completed within the first 2 years of employment. After successful completion of this course and 3 years of analytical experience, analysts are required to complete an advanced course that is also 8 weeks long.

According to the DIA, in June 2016 the DIA shifted its training strategy to provide a DIA-funded, 2-week Professional Analyst Career Education (PACE) Essentials course to all analysts who had not recently completed the initial 8-week course. This course instructs analysts

⁹⁰ CJCS, “Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD) Modification 3,” 040001Z OCT 11. See Paragraph 3.B.(3).

on the fundamentals of tradecraft and ICD requirements. The DIA centrally tracks every employee's training progress. These requirements are uniform and common for all DIA employees, regardless of assignment. Therefore, if an employee transfers between a combatant command JIOC and another DIA civilian position, their training is valid and recognized.

According to local DIA training documents, however, we found that at least 24 of the JICCENT DIA civilian analysts and managers interviewed in this investigation who, as of late 2014, were eligible for the advanced course, but had not completed all requirements of the advanced training.⁹¹

The DIA Director for Analysis, the Deputy Director for Human Resources, and the Chief of Training, Tradecraft, and Certification discussed this issue regarding DIA analyst identity and purpose with us. They emphasized that all DIA Government civilian analysts were subject to the same talent management system, were subject to local supervisor's approval of their performance objectives, and that even combatant command employees who were hired prior to 2008 were subject to the standard training requirements and career path guides.

The Chief of Training, Tradecraft, and Certification told us that the first module of all analyst training courses (including PACE Essentials) was "client service":

And we focus on, before we even get into analysis ... it's, "Who's your client? Who are you serving? Strategic, operational, tactical, what are their needs? What is driving their requirements? How do you meet those needs?" And the reason we start with that is for that very reason. We all do analysis in different ways for different purposes and if you don't know who you're serving, why you are serving them, and what they need from you, it doesn't matter how good your techniques are, you're not going to do the job.

The Director for Analysis told us:

So we've actually been very careful when we developed the [analyst] model for career development, and the criteria for promotion to make sure that things are achievable by analysts wherever they are. So, we have sort of a table of equivalences. So, in other words this experience is relevant. This experience is equally relevant. That experience is equally relevant. So, there's nothing that says, "If you don't write the PDB you're not going to make GG-13." ... And one of the things we're absolutely one of the things that we stress is that visibility and impact aren't the same. So,

⁹¹ In order to train all DIA analysts on PACE Essentials, the DIA has suspended the 8-week advanced course as of April 2016. It is expected to resume after the entire DIA workforce receives PACE Essentials, currently expected to be complete by the end of 2019 (based on current resources).

you can have impact wherever you are in certain ways. So, just because you did it for the President doesn't make it any more impactful than if you did it very well at the combatant command or [a national organization].

The Director for Analysis also stated:

I can tell you categorically that there is no guidance specified or implied that somehow an analyst serving in a combatant command has any mission bifurcation. That analyst serves at a combatant command to serve the requirements of the combatant command. And in fact, the combatant command JIOCs, themselves, within the broader analytic structure of the enterprise have specific roles. So, we have a thing called the ... Defense Intelligence Analysis Program [DIAP], that essentially ... assigns analytic responsibilities across those 16 Enterprise organizations so that we can cover as effectively and efficiently as we can the analytic perimeter we need to have a defense. ... So, if they're writing anything longer term than that or departing from what we've assigned them in the DIAP then actually they're likely to get a phone call from me about, "Why is it CENTCOM you're looking at the 10-year social, cultural implications of whatever?" ... But actually I will also tell you that CENTCOM has never got a call from me about being out of their DIAP lane. ... and that call doesn't go to the analyst. That call from me when it comes goes to the J2.

JICCEN personnel include military, civilian, and contractor employees who have a variety of backgrounds, training, and proficiencies. JICCEN civilian and military analysts must understand ODNI standards for intelligence, including ICDs 203, 206, and 208; joint intelligence doctrine, and CCJ2 procedures and policies. While the CCJ2 and JICCEN have been developing a Memorandum of Understanding covering training, administration, and computer network support since December 2014, it was still not completed or signed as of October 23, 2016.

The CCJ2 gave a local newcomers' orientation that provided all new employees an overview on USCENCOM's mission, region, and organization. Additionally, JICCEN began a monthly Orientation Workshop in November 2015 for new employees that reviews ICD 203 and ICD 206 and how to apply these standards to their products.

Yet, despite the DIA's and JICCEN's current training and orientation effort, we found during our interviews uncertainty among some JICCEN analysts and managers regarding their mission and role. While DIA Government civilian analysts assigned to JIOCs are locally supervised and directed to focus on combatant command requirements, some JICCEN analysts

misidentified themselves as members of the Intelligence Community and saw their efforts as primarily contributing to the Intelligence Community. Others believed their priority was supporting the combatant commander. Mr. Rizzio described the varying perspectives:

[JICCEN's] job is to do those things that we need to do to support that four-star's planning effort, the execution of operations, and to form his decision making ... there's massive confusion. And then when you try to explain it to people that have never been at a senior level on a staff, they don't comprehend that because it's not clearly articulated within the hiring cycle and the education process when people come to a combatant command. And if they've never been on a staff before, then they don't realize what their primary responsibility is. Now, that does not mean that our products that are going to be produced here do not get visibility up at the National level. They do. And it doesn't mean that we're preventing them from publishing at the National level ... nobody's saying that their products can't get National attention, but that's not their primary purpose here, is to get the products up to the National level. Again, my reading of this is it's to support that combatant command through the J2.

Some analysts measured their success in terms of contributing to national intelligence. One senior intelligence official described this as, "there are people here that believe that we write for the [Intelligence Community]. That we have customers in the beltway and we owe them analysis." This leader further commented how this mindset risked duplication of efforts, "just because you want to produce, doesn't mean that we need to chew up the component and the Commander's time producing on things that have already been written on [by the Intelligence Community]." Others valued getting their product into the USCENCOM Commander's Read Book. As previously discussed in the communications part of this section, if their product was excluded from a briefing or read book, and no CCJ2 leader provided an explanation, some analysts became frustrated and did not know why this had occurred.

In addition to some analysts' confusion about their role and purpose, some analysts at USCENCOM did not understand the purpose behind process and organizational changes implemented within months of MG Grove's arrival. Analysts perceived MG Grove's predecessor as more accessible, more open to analyst input, and more trusting in JICCEN leaders. Mr. Rizzio had previously been able to approve products for release, so analysts had an easier time getting their work published. Analysts routinely provided official coordination for outside organizations' products on behalf of USCENCOM. When this flexibility decreased after MG Grove's arrival along with his different management style, analysts questioned the reasons for changes, particularly because there was not clear or direct explanation. One analyst

stated that “we have no voice in the national community on [these issues]” because of the changes.

For JICCEN to most effectively convey its analysis, authors need to be receptive to, and receive, constructive criticism and feedback on their products. Authors also need their writing to clearly express why is it necessary for a senior leader to invest their time to read their products.

Reviewers can also face analysts’ opposition to editing and changes. One JICCEN manager noted analysts historically have complained, ““Why are you reviewing my product?” It’s like an artist. Every one of these people are artists and they think that their art is perfect the first time, but as it goes up the chain people start asking questions because that’s what we’re trying to do. We’re trying to make these products the best they can be to make them complete.” Another senior intelligence officer describes newer analysts’ reactions to criticism:

“Hey, I went to Georgetown. I went to wherever, great education. I’m really smart and this is what it said, and this is what it means.” You deal with that all the time. You sit down with them and you say, “Okay, this is what you said. Got it. This is what the evidence is. Got it. Let’s lay this out unemotionally with a little more logic.” And then sit down and talk to them and they’re like, “Oh, okay, I’ve got it.”

Both feedback and analyst responsiveness to criticism can be improved at JICCEN. One reviewer told us that analysts who received unclear feedback and corrections to their products became suspicious:

So there’s not clarity on which level of review those changes may have been made at ... So, the first couple of months ... it sort of bred like just this tiny seed of distrust for the review process as a whole. Which just sort of metastasized over a period of months, where when analysts who had done kind of a shoddy work putting their argument together, when there were changes from that level on products that were genuinely not very good, people attributed it – and that feeling sort of spread to it being “political” and them changing assessments to be part of the line. So, I know there are several analysts just that I’ve known for years who were just not very good at what we do, whose products I have had the privilege of re-writing many times in the last 12 years, and some of those analysts were especially sensitive to now saying when there were changes to their products it must have been political.

Some analysts disagreed, instead believing changes were politically motivated. However, it was clear that the reasons for the changes and regular constructive feedback on why the changes were made, was not effectively communicated to analysts. We believe that exacerbated the tensions in the JICCEN and contributed to the widespread perception that the changes were designed to impose a narrative and distort the intelligence relating to OIR.

Recommendations (Organizational Identity)

11. The relationship, reporting responsibilities, and intelligence requirements that apply to DIA analysts detailed to combatant commands should be clarified, in writing, so that DIA employees and their supervisors clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

12. The DIA should provide new JICCEN personnel clear instructions on their direct support relationship with USCENCOM, including what analytical standards apply and who sets JICCEN priorities and reporting requirements.

13. USCENCOM should consider adding a USCENCOM overview to its newcomer orientation that includes the area of responsibility, key priorities, operational plans, and priority intelligence requirements so analysts can better understand what is relevant to their audience.

14. The CCJ2 should provide new JICCEN personnel with a briefing to introduce J2 leaders, stress the integrity of the analytical process, and explain any tailored procedures, references (such as JP 1-02, service publications), and style guides. The CCJ2 should include any specific local guidance on product reviews, coordination, and approval, and explain the importance of feedback and being open to criticism. The CCJ2 should consider discussing the commander's preferences for intelligence, where intelligence is briefed, and coalition considerations.

15. JICCEN should highlight any local style guides or military terminology that supplements the DIA Style Guide. It should provide sample products to guide and teach analysts to tailor their writing for combatant command consumers. It should identify any references for military terminology that analysts should use, such as JP 1-02 and Service publications.

16. CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders should provide clearer guidance and feedback to the analysts on how intelligence products are reviewed and considered above the JICCEN level. JICCEN should incorporate additional training to address any trends or systemic deficiencies identified in intelligence products.

17. The USD(I) should track and follow up on the DIA's training and certification of all DIA employees serving at USCENCOM.

Routine USCENTCOM Analytic Review Process

After Mr. Rizzio's arrival in 2010, USCENTCOM established a formal analytic tradecraft program and designated three elements to assist in the analytic tradecraft process. The Analytical Review Team ran seminars on tradecraft and worked with analysts during the writing process through the use of the Pre-Writing Worksheet. During the review of routine products, the Analytical Review Team would also examine products during production through Mr. Rizzio's review. JICCEN also trained tradecraft coaches in various branches to do peer-to-peer coaching with fellow analysts while they were writing and revising their products. The Tradecraft Council, composed of JICCEN leadership, senior intelligence officers in branches and divisions, and coaches would meet approximately once a month to discuss and recommend appropriate training and ways to improve analytic quality. Some initiatives included a briefing course and mock briefing boards for junior analysts. Finally, the Product Evaluation Board would grade finished products against ICD 203 and ICD 206 standards. Additionally, tradecraft and analytical guidance is discussed at production meetings, which occurred three times per week.

Pre-Crisis Production

Before the crisis, JICCEN analysts were providing routine intelligence products at the operational and strategic levels. These products were generally characterized by longer-term analysis and focusing on longer outlook (months or years), although sometimes they focused on shorter range outlooks. Analysts would produce these longer-term products over several days or weeks, if time was available, which allowed for collaboration with other experts in defense and national intelligence organizations. The routine production process included a pre-writing worksheet developed by the Analytical Review Team to help the analyst structure an effective argument and document logic, evidence, and sources. After an analyst completed this worksheet, the Analytical Review Team would review it before writing started. Normally subordinate intelligence organizations' products, such as joint task force's intelligence summary or a maritime activity report, would be one input that JICCEN would analyze, along with national- and theater-level products to fuse information and develop their assessment. Upon completion, the author would formally coordinate the product with appropriate subordinate units and external organizations. Then it would be reviewed prior to publication.

Although USCENTCOM is not a member of the Intelligence Community, a 2011 modification of the CJCS Execution Order for JIOCs⁹² also directed that “JIOCs will conduct all-source intelligence analysis in accordance with accepted DOD and IC methods and standards.” Furthermore, JP 2-0 (October 22, 2013)⁹³ states, “All source [*sic*] intelligence should comply with *Intelligence Community Directive #203, Analytic Standards*.” However, JP 2-0 is ambiguous as to if and how these standards apply to tactical intelligence. It also contains out-of-date intelligence confidence levels in Appendix A, used prior to the current levels specified in ICD 203.

The June 21, 2007, version of ICD 203 stated, “analytical elements will apply the IC Analytic Standards in a manner appropriate to the length, purpose, classification, and production timeframe of each product.” The January 2, 2015, version of ICD 203 also directs the standards “be applied in each analytical product in a manner appropriate to its purpose, the type, and scope of its underlying source information, its production timeline, and its customers.”

JP 2-0 describes “all-source” intelligence by comparing it to single-source intelligence that comes from one discipline:

Whereas collection, processing, and exploitation are primarily performed by specialists from one of the major intelligence disciplines, analysis and production is done primarily by all-source analysts that fuse together information from all intelligence disciplines. The product of multidiscipline fusion effort is all-source intelligence.

Both USCENTCOM routine and counter-ISIL campaign products, such as the OIR INTSUM and First Look, are all-source intelligence products.

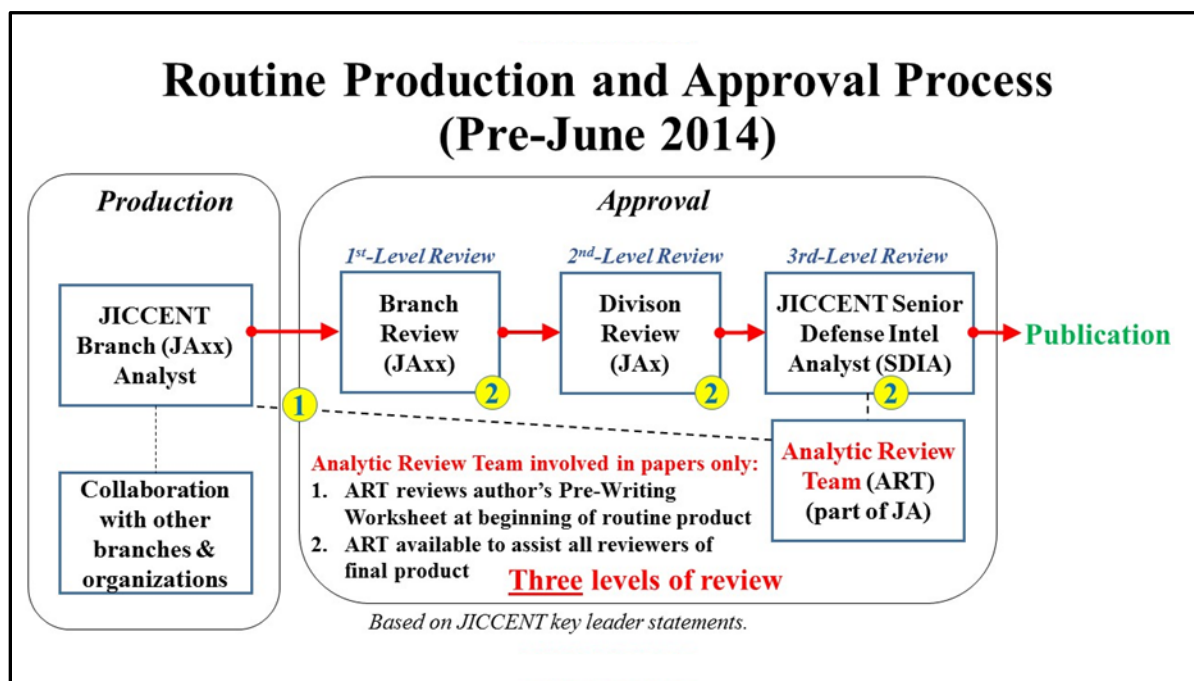
⁹² CJCS, “Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD)” Modification 3, 040001Z OCT 11. See Paragraph 3.B.(3).

⁹³ The 2013 version of JP 2-0 contains out-of-date “Intelligence Confidence Levels in Analytic Judgments.” Appendix A does not reflect those directed in the 2015 version of ICD 203, Paragraph D.6.e.(2)(a). JP 2-0 provides no guidance on how ICD 203 standards should be applied to tactical intelligence.

The CCJ2 adopted ICD 203 standards. JICCEN²T also modeled its routine review process off the “Analytic Review Process” from the DIA DI Tradecraft Note 08-09. JICCEN²T considers these tradecraft notes to be authoritative documents on how to apply analytic standards. JICCEN²T’s routine process consists of three levels of review discussed in the following flow chart (See Figure VII.3.1.) and follow-on paragraphs: (1) branch or team senior analyst, (2) division-level senior intelligence officer, and (3) Senior Defense Intelligence Analyst (Mr. Rizzio) review. According to Mr. Rizzio, the Analytic Review Team was available to assist all three levels of reviewers as “a review element within the three-tier review process ... to assist me in getting the products at a high quality”.

We created this flow chart and subsequent flow charts from witness testimony and JICCEN²T documentation, where available. They are general models of the processes described by key leaders and analysts. Additionally, our sample review of products revealed products going through these sequences of review.

Figure VII.3.1. Routine Production and Approval Process (Pre-June 2014)



According to DIA DI Tradecraft Note 08-09, the first review (branch or team level) focuses on the fundamentals of the analytic argument. It evaluates the draft product for clarity of analytic judgments and clear, concise writing. It also evaluates whether the draft presents a logical argument, distinguishes between facts and judgments, provides adequate evidence or logic for all key judgments, expresses confidence levels, and characterizes sources. This first-level review also ensures collaboration and coordination are complete and that the draft includes

an acknowledgement of alternatives, proper classification markings, and releasability information. It also provides ideas for accompanying graphics and a control on timing and timeliness of the product.

The second-level review (division) focuses on the quality of analytic expression. This review covers the logic, clarity, and impact of the product's key assessment; identification of key drivers for the topic; discussion of how the product advances understanding of the topic; and explanation of consistency or changes in previous analytical positions. This review considers biases resulting in static assessments despite changes in evidence or context, the validity and completeness of assumptions, the quality of evidence and analytic logic to justify the stated confidence levels, and the quality and completeness of the source summary statement. Furthermore, this reviewer examined the logic and comprehensiveness in analyzing alternatives and the identification of implications and opportunities.

The third-level review (senior defense intelligence analyst) examines the product from the customer's perspective. This review considers how clear and decisive analytic expressions are, the products' strategic or operational context, known or anticipated customer interests and concerns, and appropriate depth, breadth, level of detail, and style for the intended audience. This evaluation determines how a product answers questions that a reader might have on the topic, details alternative analysis, and identifies implications, risks, and opportunities pertinent to customer's portfolio or sphere of influence. This reviewer will also check that the product highlights consistencies, changes, or differences with other DIA, defense intelligence, or Intelligence Community analysis. USCENTCOM's Analytic Review Team assisted Mr. Rizzio with this review for routine products.

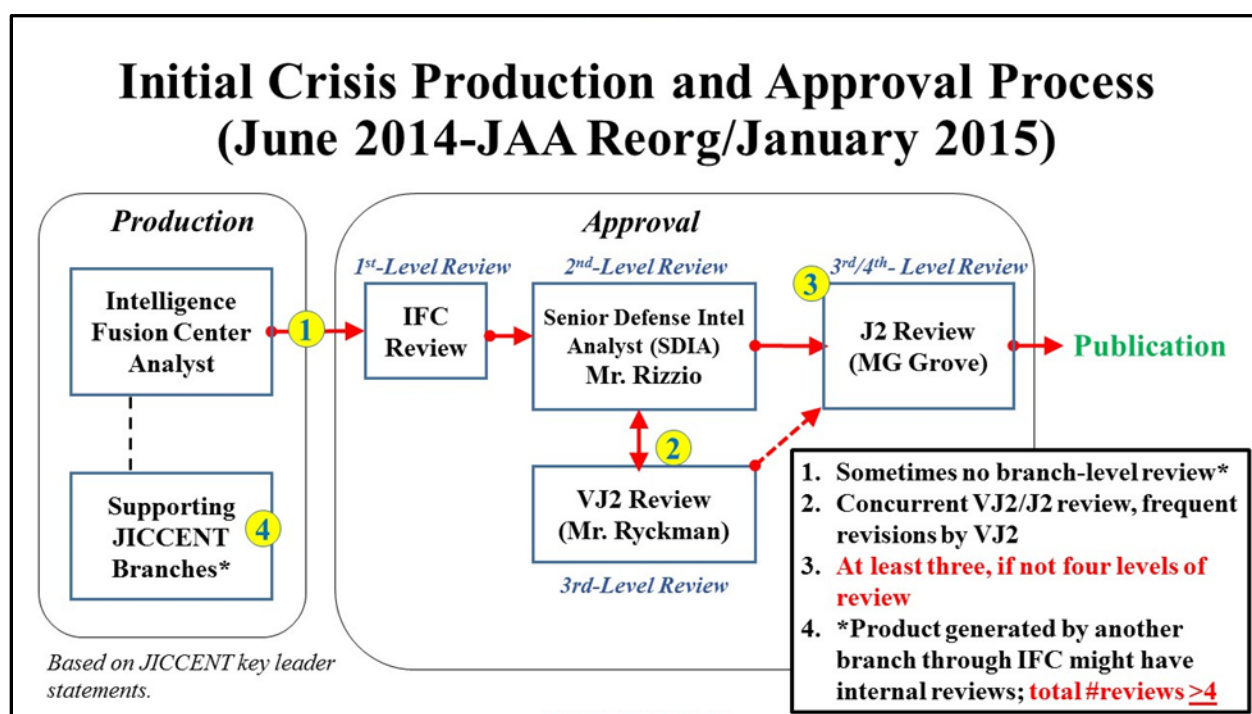
Pre-June 2014 Crisis Production and Approval Process

The JICCANT Crisis SOP (January 2014) outlined the planned production and approval path for future crises and the IFC activation. It contained only two levels of review, and allowed for Mr. Rizzio or a lower-level reviewer to approve products for release, which expedited dissemination during a crisis. It also did not involve the Analytic Review Team in the review process. However, JICCANT did not use either of these streamlined approaches during the counter-ISIL campaign.

Since CCJ2 used ICD 203 and DIA DI Tradecraft Note 08-09 as standards, it should have issued written guidance or policy on any variations from them for crisis products. For instance, the SOP did not outline which of the normal first-, second-, and third-level review responsibilities would be handled by the initial or second reviews. The CCJ2 should have also explained these changes to the workforce and how they still met ICD 203 standards. This would have clarified for the analysts why USCENTCOM deviated from the standard DIA procedures analysts knew. While the Crisis SOP did outline the planned process, it was not widely disseminated to, nor understood by, all employees. It also did not specify which products could be approved by Mr. Rizzio and subordinate IFC leaders.

Actual Initial Crisis Production and Approval Process. During the counter-ISIL campaign, JICCENT used a different, unpublished process for crisis products (other than the ISIL Assessment Tool). Like the published process in the SOP, it excluded the Analytic Review Team. However, the initial crisis process, which is modeled in the following flow chart (see Figure VII.3.2.), generally increased the levels of review to more than three.⁹⁴ Since the crisis occurred upon MG Grove's arrival, JICCENT never grew accustomed to this new process, and the reasons for the new process were not explained.

Figure VII.3.2. Initial Crisis Production and Approval Process



⁹⁴ We recognize that DIA standards outline three levels of review. However, we identified that, in practice, there were frequently more levels or layers of review involved in CCJ2 OIR intelligence production.

For daily counter-ISIL campaign intelligence products, branches such as Iraq and Syria would provide input to the IFC, where it would be collated. While some branches thoroughly reviewed input, this review was inconsistent. Usually, the IFC leader on shift would provide the first-level review. Next, Mr. Rizzio would review the product, usually with the IFC or branch analyst who created the product. Then it would be sent simultaneously to both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman. This was an additional step from the published crisis review process. Prior to February 2015, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman did not simply act as a final approval of products, but performed reviewing functions. For instance, Mr. Ryckman often returned products for changes, including word choices and revisions.

The initial crisis product review had several weaknesses, which were compounded by inadequate communication. There was little time for authors to self-review, and products that were often handed from one shift to the next for completion. Authors did not have time to use the Pre-Writing Worksheets, which likely impacted the organization, argument, and evidence in some products. It was inconsistent, as sometimes MG Grove approved products without Mr. Ryckman's review. Some branches that developed products for the IFC thoroughly reviewed them, but others would skip this step, placing a burden on IFC and subsequent reviewers.

Moreover, the non-standard routing and JICCEN's inconsistent enforcement of a branch review bypassed the direct supervisors at branch level who, based on their established supervisor relationship, were in a position to coach and train analysts to improve. Rather, the first-line review was at the busy IFC level, by managers working across shifts who may not have previously worked with the authors (and did not know their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations). Time constraints meant that the Analytic Review Team's assistance was not feasible. All of this created increased burden on Mr. Rizzio and more senior reviewers.

Mr. Ryckman stated that inexperience and intermediate leader's enforcement and supervision was often the problem with first-level reviews:

What I've found many times is ... we hired so many people in mid 2000s and we had so many junior folks that we had people who maybe have been in the business a year or two as [senior intelligence analysts], and they really didn't have the expertise and background to actually really function as a first level review. Which then the second level reviewers were having to do a lot of that and go back and say, 'Wait a minute. I just looked at your source packet and I don't actually see any of this. The sources don't match anything on the slide kind of thing.' So, it's, I think, a shared responsibility at all levels up through that process.

As the second-level review, Mr. Rizzio sometimes became a choke point. We were also told by some witnesses that the communication between Mr. Rizzio and the senior leaders, including MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman, was not effective. Under pressure to deliver perfection on-time, Mr. Rizzio tried to give analysts and subordinate supervisors feedback. Unfortunately, he did not always understand CCJ2 guidance, as one leader observed:

Mr. Rizzio interpreting requests for information or questions that were being posed by the J2 or the VJ2 and misinterpreting that ... What I found was that if you could remove Mr. Rizzio and actually speak directly to the J2 and the VJ2, it was a hell of a lot easier to explain ... here's the J2's problem with this. This is what we need to do. This is how we're going to approach it, and then to say back to the J2, sir, you're missing what we're telling you. Here's where this analytic line is coming from. Let us send you the additional information. And, again, Mr. Rizzio has a tremendous amount of stuff on his plate. But he, and the J2 and VJ2, they just do not communicate well.

Mr. Rizzio did not generally directly confront subordinates on deficiencies during his review. Instead, he took more of a coaching approach, and they did not improve as quickly. In addition, Mr. Ryckman made frequent revisions, which were often a matter of sourcing, style, or word choice. Sometimes these were different than Mr. Rizzio's previous edits. Subordinates viewed this back-and-forth as unnecessary, as one analyst described:

It literally took eight iterations of this paper going up and coming back, and going up and coming back, because the sources, I don't know if it was the words that I was using or the chain that we were going through, or what. Finally, I called up Mr. Ryckman and I said, "Okay. Let's just work through this. What's the issue here?" And in a matter of 10 minutes we were able to work through the issue and it was a wording issue. Basically once I explained why I was using those words he was like, "Oh, that makes perfect sense." So we moved on to the next thing and talking with him it was much easier. But ... working through [Mr. Rizzio] we would make the changes. Buddy would send it up. It would come back down with more questions and we'd do it again. But once I was able to talk to [Mr. Ryckman] it was actually much easier. So, he just wants to know ... why you are coming to the conclusions you are coming to.

One senior intelligence officer stated that MG Grove's scrutiny and questioning was a way of enforcing ICD 203 standards on intelligence products, even though he wasn't using the Analytic Review Team checklist, but checking on each standard. JP 2-0 notes that the "J-2 is responsible for ensuring that the full spectrum of opinions and views obtained through collaboration are considered in the formulation of the joint force's intelligence products." However, MG Grove appeared to have personally, and through his immediate subordinates, continued to correct end products without training and coaching JICCENT analysts and managers to improve future quality.

Both MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman said they were frustrated with the quality of products they received initially. They complained to each other that they were having to make significant corrections. For example, on October 24, 2014, Mr. Ryckman emailed MG Grove describing a First Look product draft's review, "lack of attention to detail and laziness. ... At least three GG15s accepted that input/answer, before I made them pull up all of the traffic and read it to me on the phone. ...the JIC Commander needs to spend more time inside his organization, making sure you and I are not editing / correcting his products." On October 25, 2014, MG Grove then emailed the JICCENT Commander stating, "the back and forth by [Mr. Ryckman] and the analysts to get this right, and the analysts [*sic*] continued desire to just dump reporting into these slides is unexplainable. Need you to dig into this ASAP and apply the right manning to the problem."

Over the next 2 weeks, MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman expressed over email that the products they were getting still required their personal review instead of being a finished product. Mr. Ryckman complained about the quality of the JICCENT product, and wrote "if this is all we are asking them to produce ... it should be almost perfect by the time it gets to me." In this same message to MG Grove, Mr. Ryckman included his email on November 7, 2014, where he scolded Mr. Rizzio in writing, "This is two days in a row where the INTSUM sent to me for review was nowhere near ready. I am supposed to be a final review, not the primary editor. Most of this is repeat issues, and lack of attention to detail. The last several days have done very little to bolster my confidence." MG Grove replied to Mr. Ryckman and agreed, stating, "The versions they are sending out are horrible."

Initial Feedback

DIA Directorate for Analysis Tradecraft Note 08-09 states:

Finished intelligence products ultimately are [command's products], not personal ones. They represent the combined collaborative talents of authors and reviewers. ... The review process is a collaborative opportunity in which analysts and reviewers learn from the experience and commentary of others while improving the quality of their product. Feedback – both positive and critical – is fundamental to the analytic process.

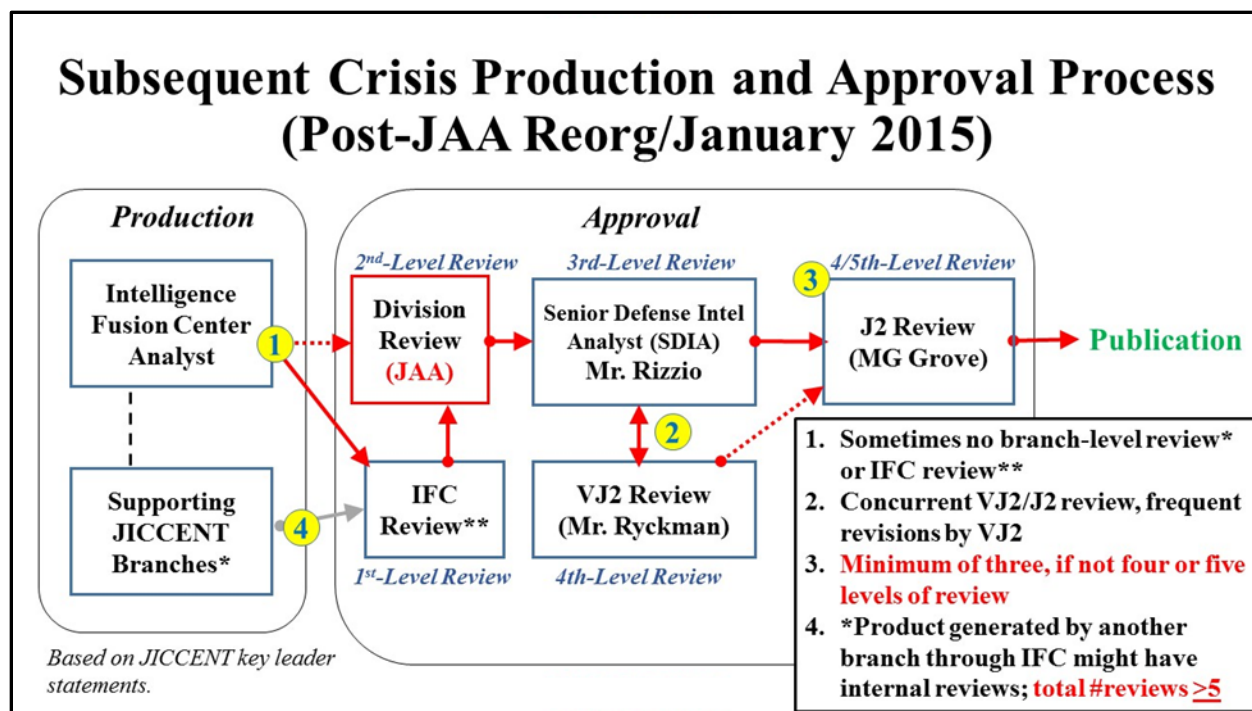
MG Grove would give some feedback during rehearsals, at an early morning meeting with JICCEN and J2 leaders, and to JICCEN analysts in the afternoon over a Tandberg device (a video-teleconference phone). Some briefers who received face-to-face feedback at rehearsals said they understood what MG Grove wanted, but one frequent breifer stated “he was not as interactive [as we were used to] ... he either had preconceived opinions of things or that he could be a little bit quick to be dismissive of analytic input.” However, analysts in the IFC took turns sitting in front of this Tandberg, so guidance consisted of dialogue that restricted MG Grove to talking to a single person. This feedback was largely a one-way communication that did not involve everyone in the process, especially analysts working outside of the IFC and analysts on different shifts. While Mr. Rizzio and the JICCEN Commander sometimes relayed guidance to analysts on MG Grove's behalf, often through Night Orders, this indirect guidance did not allow for clarification or questions. One senior intelligence official asserted that the Tandberg and emails were less effective, “actual face-to-face interface that seems to work better for most folks than it does as a face on a phone or a voice at the end of a line. ... we all know anytime you tell somebody, who tells somebody, who tells somebody, the story kind of changes based upon that person's perspective of what was said.”

These brief interactions between CCJ2 senior leaders, reviewers, and analysts were not consistent with the collaborative dialogue described in Tradecraft Note 08-09. Consequently, reviewers kept making the same changes in products repeatedly; and the analysts interpreted these changes, without adequate feedback as to why they were made, as evidence of an effort to impose a narrative or to distort intelligence.

Subsequent Crisis Production and Approval Process

After JICCEN reorganized in January 2015, the newly formed Near East Division was added to the process prior to products reaching Mr. Rizzio, which is generally modeled in the following flow chart (see Figure VII.3.3.). After Near East Division level leaders conducted the second-level review, products went to Mr. Rizzio (SDIA/JIC DISL), who then routed them to VJ2 and J2. This increased the layers of review to at least four.

Figure VII.3.3. Subsequent Crisis Production and Approval Process



Results

The subsequent crisis process added layers to the process but did not improve the amount or quality of feedback that reached analysts. It did involve those branch leaders, who were now subordinate to the Near East Division, more in the review process, which improved the quality of input for more-senior reviewers. However, the additional layers reduced the time available for analysts to produce the initial products.

We also were told that, over time, the quality of lower-level reviews improved. One Near East Division leader noted that by mid-2015 “people got familiar with the problem set, and roles, and procedures, and SOPs became second nature and we were comfortable. We had done some ... a lot of training.” Another Near East Division leader stated how CCJ2 leader involvement in daily products decreased over time, “[By] January, February, the J2 and VJ2 were sort of passively engaged in the INTSUM. By February they were hands off and the JICCENT Commander had the authority to go ahead and sign it out.” As of July 2015, the INTSUM “comes to ... one of the ... division-level leaders ... [we] then chop it and then Buddy Rizzio now reviews it. Previously the JICCENT Commander would review that and sign off on that.”

Subsequent Feedback

In October or November 2015, after the allegations relating to this investigation became known, MG Grove began attending daily afternoon meetings at JICCENT IFC, which increased

dialogue with analysts and understanding by analysts of his intent and analytical perspectives. Some analysts remained skeptical of his motives, while others found this an extremely positive step. One analyst stated:

I think it's a great change ... I got the sense the guy was inaccessible up until this. I mean, I've been in his office a couple of times. He never asked my name because I back-filled [a predecessor] but now that he's out it's a very positive thing for the intel side because he's here. He's seeing, and analysts that are actually working on it are talking to him, not intermediaries that will leave out things they don't understand or whatever. I think it's very positive stuff.

Another senior analyst described skeptical JICCEN members' receptiveness to more-recent feedback as:

There's basically no faith in the process. [Skeptical analysts] have no faith in the analytic leadership here, and basically it taints, in my perspective, each feedback or piece of input they received ... they took [recent feedback] as threatening and negative ... So, I'm concerned when the organization has such bitterness, really all involved assumed the other is not operating from a position of integrity or responsibility or mission accomplishment.

Recommendations (Review Process)

18. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should jointly assess the production process for crisis products and develop written, specific policy that explains what crisis products senior intelligence leaders will review and the rationale for this specialized review.

19. Joint Staff should update JP 2-0 to bring it into compliance with the 2015 version of ICD 203. The Expressions of Uncertainties in Appendix A and Figure A-1. should match the ICD 203's expressions of likelihood or probability (Para D.6.e.(2)(a)).

20. The DIA should identify and explain the function of the Ombudsman, and JICCEN should explain the function of the Analytical Review Team to new analysts so they know who to contact with tradecraft concerns.

Coordination and Collaboration

As discussed in the section on alleged distortion, during the counter-ISIL campaign, MG Grove changed who could formally coordinate on behalf of USCENTCOM during an external agency's development of an intelligence product. However, he and other CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders did not clearly or effectively communicate this change. As a result, we found

that many JICCEN employees believed, mistakenly, that they were not permitted to collaborate with other organizations, which is different from their ability to coordinate on other organizations' products on behalf of USCENCOM.

We found that many CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders and analysts used the terms coordination and collaboration interchangeably. Joint Pub 2-0 makes a clear distinction between the two terms.

The collaborative sharing of information should not be confused with interorganizational documents coordination; **collaboration** is informal information sharing among individuals while **document coordination** is a formal staff process in which official organizational positions are obtained or confirmed. [emphasis added]

According to multiple analysts, prior to MG Grove's arrival at USCENCOM, analysts had the latitude to coordinate on other agency's intelligence products. Analysts would cc their supervisors when non-concurring with another agency's intelligence product and usually on a concurrence as well. In October 2014, as a result of multiple products being coordinated with low-level JICCEN analysts, MG Grove issued a change that ultimately retained document coordination on an external organization's products at the CCJ2 level. The change was not a written policy and was communicated by the JICCEN Commander through several emails, but the emails did not clearly distinguish between coordination and collaboration. His emails stated:

October 5, 2014: "Internal coordination with components and supporting forces of draft products is authorized and required ... Requests from external organizations for coordination of analytical products need to be reviewed by senior person present before returning as USCENCOM reviewed."

October 7, 2014: "You are authorized to have analyst to analyst exchanges, but coordination approval is retained by J2/VJ2. Use the INTSUM, as the J2 approved analysis, when discussing [specific groups]."

One JICCEN subordinate leader not only informed his branch of the new procedures, but also of the reasons for the change:

Given the nature of the operations in which CENTCOM is involved, there is high interest among outside organizations for anything that has a CENTCOM logo on it. Our products effectively reflect the position of our Commander, J2, and senior leadership. A slide with a CENTCOM crest is the effective equivalent of "This is what the CENTCOM commander thinks

about this topic.” The same is true when we coordinate on national level products.

However, another JICCEN branch leader gave a much different reason for this policy change. His email, which reached three of the seven employees identified in this investigation as believing they could no longer collaborate on products, stated:

Mr. Rizzio stated that nobody in [this branch] is authorized to coordinate, formally or informally, on any national agency products. All products that a national agency seeks to coordinate (even DIA HQ DIDs) should be not lead to any email commentary back from any of us ... I know this is obnoxious- it's not only un-collegial and lacking in professional courtesy, it violates tradecraft standards, and has the appearance of fostering and furthering an unethical “cooking the books” by our leadership.

The impact of this miscommunication and interpretation of the guidance was that many analysts believed that collaboration was not permitted, and that they could not communicate with outside analysts as they developed their own intelligence products. Accordingly, they and their branch did not benefit from full collaboration with other organizations.

In short, CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders did not issue clear guidance and accurately explain the change, which led to misinterpretation, confusion, and concern. This was amplified by widespread use of the word “coordination” in JICCEN for both collaboration and coordination actions. We did not find evidence that CCJ2 or JICCEN leaders discovered this confusion. Had they been engaging first-level analysts through feedback sessions, visits, sensing sessions, or town halls earlier, they could have detected this confusion and more effectively addressed the misunderstanding.

After this J2 guidance, all counter-ISIL product coordination had to go through VJ2 and J2. According to Mr. Rizzio, this was later delegated back to the JICCEN Commander's and Mr. Rizzio's level. Mr. Rizzio stated that he could not recall when this happened. While we have found no formal rescinding of this guidance, the requirement to have J2 and VJ2 provide formal document coordination stopped being included in Night Orders after October 2014.

Recommendation (Coordination and Collaboration)

21. The CCJ2 should issue written guidance to intelligence analysts to distinguish the difference between “collaboration” and “coordination,” and who is authorized to conduct each. The CCJ2 should consider whether to delegate authority for coordination in specified circumstances.

Guidance on Use of Single-Source Intelligence

Our investigation found that MG Grove was reluctant to brief USCENTCOM leaders on uncorroborated single-source intelligence reports, especially those from human, signal, or open-source sources. During his interview, MG Grove stated that he often wanted to “let the information bake,” which meant waiting to see what other information came in to see if it will “change our line of thinking.”

MG Grove distinguished cases where unconfirmed single-source intelligence had a force protection aspect. Although there was no written guidance, CCJ2 leaders recognized that there were exceptions for single-source, force protection information. One JICCENT divisional leader cited at least one example where single-source info was rapidly disseminated to deployed forces with the caveat that it was uncorroborated, which gave them maximum warning to adjust their security posture.

However, the lack of a written policy, combined with the communication problems within the CCJ2 and JICCENT, raised the risk that an analyst could have failed to forward such single source information, under the belief that it was not sufficient for the CCJ2. This risked USCENTCOM from meeting its “Responsibility to Provide” outlined in the 2007 Intelligence Community Policy Memorandum #2007-200-2, which requires intelligence organizations to balance the interests of intelligence consumers, including to “make available timely warning ... while protecting intelligence information and intelligence sources and methods.”

One of ICD 203's analytic standards is that products should be based on all available sources of information. JP 2-0 designates “the joint force J-2 ... [as] the single focal point for assessing and presenting to the commander any disparate intelligence assessments from outside agencies or analysts.” MG Grove further stated:

I've got a responsibility both from a management piece to ... [get] a collaborated, coordinated, all source fusion piece. So, if I see a First Look product or I see a kind of a briefing slide which is really that day to day interaction that we have with the Commander and it seems like it's a little bit off because we're being very reliant on a single source report, then I'll probably say, okay to the analysts, “Hey, do you got anything more? Could you broaden your experience? Could you look beyond [this area]? Could you apply this to, does it only apply to [this area] or does it apply to the rest of the [related regions]?” So, my point here is I think that's where I own the analytical piece of that.

Many analysts we interviewed agreed that there were benefits to being cautious with single-source reporting, and several viewed this approach as consistent with previous USCENTCOM J2s under whom they had served. One manager described how this approach

filtered out questionable or irrelevant reporting and that some analysts wanted to include certain intelligence, because “as soon as they get information they just want to produce, produce, produce, produce, and ... [that] being first with the truth is not necessarily the same as just being first to push a product out.” Another analyst endorsed the approach, describing it as a way to get closer to the truth instead of including extraneous, unconfirmed information:

We let it bake a little bit. Let's kind of distill the information, because a lot of times the first bits of information that do come out are not necessarily the correct bits of information. So, a lot of times, we even tell analysts if something's hot off the press we'll verbally mention it to him, but we're going to continue kind of watching this. We kind of put it on our watch list so we can kind of distil [*sic*] the story. I've noticed if we throw it out there right away, the story line typically does always change because it's the first bit of news is typically a pretty significant percentage that is wrong out of that piece of information. So if it's kind of a, doesn't make sense. We're not really sure. The thought is let it bake for a bit and then let's get the more correct statement.

The limited collection capability also meant that some of the initial single-source products might never be confirmed by other reporting. However, a single-source report could be important to report or could be the first indication that an adversary is doing something unexpected. One analyst expressed concern about the blanket policy and noted:

To withhold it completely is still something, with the appetite for information that there was at the time, that's something I have a hard time with. I can understand in a quieter time, a less intense situation where there's -- like now for instance, where there is a CJTF on the ground and they're watching tactical level movements closely. That's [the subordinate joint task force's] responsibility. We can back away from that and provide more strategic intel were we would avoid the single source HUMINT because we're not concerned about tactical level movements that's the JTF's responsibility. But at that time there was no JTF and that responsibility of course falls back to us at the command. I feel like we may have missed a few opportunities because of it.

IICD 206, "Sourcing Requirements for Disseminated Analytic Products," establishes sourcing requirements for disseminated analytic products. It complements ICD 203 by directing a complete citation of each source, along with a strongly recommended source summary statement that describes the "strengths and weaknesses of the source base, which sources are most important to key judgments, what sources are meaningfully corroborative or conflicting, and should highlight any specific subject matter expertise used to develop the assessment." However, it does not suggest that single source reporting be set aside. Rather, it provides a standard way for analysts to include any report and properly describe its reliability.

Analysts could have used single-source information and documented it as unconfirmed using the guidance of ICD 206. Instead, most times, CCJ2 leaders directed them to confirm reporting if there were means available. The analyst would then attempt to find other sources, as well as checking with subordinate units, to confirm intelligence, with mixed results. Since MG Grove was also concerned about providing current intelligence, analysts who did find confirming reporting might be unable to present the report. In some instances, by the time they received corroboration, the original information was stale or superseded by new developments, and would not be published. Analysts therefore became frustrated that they could not present the single-source information with appropriate context and caveats.

Emphasis of Operational Reporting

The CCJ2 leadership's emphasis on attempting to confirm assessments with operators in theater, such as CJTF-OIR headquarters once it was operational, was understandable, but it indicated to some analysts the impression that the CCJ2 favored operational reporting at the expense of conventional, single-source and other intelligence reports. Over time, JICCENT was required to coordinate all counter-ISIL campaign products with the subordinate CJTF-OIR prior to publication, which often delayed or prevented intelligence analysis from being provided.

Operational reports from deployed commanders can provide additional perspectives and useful information that intelligence analysts should consider or incorporate into their assessments. However, they are not always suitable or available in all cases. Unlike formal intelligence reports, an operational report is not a structured product subject to strict guidance on documenting how, where, when, and from whom information was obtained. They are also subject to the same human errors that intelligence reports are, including limited access, bias, and even aspirational tone.

We believe that the CCJ2 placed too much emphasis on operational reporting when evaluating reports on the ISF. This seemed to stem from an unattainable desire for high-confidence reporting in various circumstances, even though the limited collection environment made confirmation unlikely. One experienced senior intelligence analyst described for us the

dilemma analysts faced when information on the ISF was questioned and conflicted with commanders' reports that were accepted at face value:

If you are to contradict what General Austin and the commanders down range believe is happening, you need to come to [CCJ2] with a higher burden, with multiple reports. The challenge here, it goes back to, we didn't have the collection, we didn't have the intelligence on the ground. So to ask me for a higher burden of proof almost means I am not going to do that. I can't do that because I do not have any additional information because I lack the collection. So I can "let it bake" and if something then comes in, additional reporting, or indications that help support, or confirm, or deny that report that I am baking, now I can inject it back in. So I don't believe anybody did anything nefarious in terms of trying to paint a rosy picture. I just think it was a much more challenging to get the less rosy picture conveyed to decision makers, because of the desire to have a higher burden of proof.

As discussed previously, JP 2-01 outlines circumstances in which a higher burden of proof can be required.⁹⁵ These circumstances include controversial topics, complex matters, or topics of interest to policy makers. However, if CCJ2 leaders impose a higher burden without providing a rationale, especially when analysts perceive that its application is not uniform (only for bad news), analysts may reach their own explanations for this higher burden. We believe this is what happened in this case, which contributed to the perception of distortion.

In addition, while corroborating intelligence with operational reporting can be useful (and appropriate due diligence in evaluating a single-source report), analysts should base conclusions after evaluating sources, and not treat operational reporting as infallible. Analysts should consider relevant information in operational reports, provided that these sources are cited, described, and presented within their appropriate context in accordance with ICD 206. Analysts should then evaluate the contents like any other source using known analytical tradecraft. There is even a standard method to source an email or other documents that are not serialized reporting.

One divisional leader described the process as fusing information from on-the-ground forces with intelligence. JICCENT considered what forward forces stated, but it was added to the collected intelligence reporting for consideration and fusion:

[Reporting from units on the ground] was considered. It was evaluated, and ... if there was no sourcing on it we didn't take it. But if they had [intelligence surveillance or reconnaissance], or they had personal eyes on, witness on the battlefield kind of thing,

⁹⁵ JP 2-01, Appendix D, Page D-7 and D-8.

then we had to incorporate it. But it didn't ... supplant the intelligence. It brought context to the intelligence. So we fused it which is what we're supposed to do.

If forward forces could neither confirm nor deny it or disagreed with the intelligence, that should not have prevented the intelligence from being briefed or included in an intelligence product with appropriate caveats and description of the source. At USCENTCOM, when CJTF-OIR disagreed with JICCENT on a product line, JICCENT would try to resolve the issue or publish the product with a CJTF tone box to present the different view. However, analysts' perceptions of this process varied. A division-level leader stated:

If we [had] a disagreement with the folks downrange ... and they would send back terminology, or a change, or strike something out. Sometimes we took it. Sometimes we didn't. It just depended on if they made sense or not. If they had serious disagreements ... and CJTF said 'No, we completely disagree.' Then we would not brief it that day. We'd work out of difference and we'd brief it two or three days later ... if we couldn't find consensus on what we wanted to say between the intel, and the operators ... we would put it into a paper and then we would have a tone box ... [with a description of the point and reason] we would keep our position but allow their voice to be heard ... [this happened] maybe five or six [times].

CCJ2 leaders deferred to operational reporting in many cases. For example, as discussed in the distortion section, in late October 2014, Mr. Ryckman provided comments on a First Look product that directed, "We should NEVER include a comment on [the ISF withdrawing] without confirmation from [downrange forces]." He later modified that instruction to "We should VERY SELDOM have a slide on ISF that is unconfirmed."

This barrier for intelligence that does not match reports from operational channels risked limiting what information was considered by commanders and others. The "let-it-bake" approach toward single-source reports, and the poor communications in the organization, also presented a risk for groupthink and confirmation bias, where analysts only look for and include reports that confirm the running assessment, while ignoring or omitting contradictory information. This effect posed significant risks, when: (1) analysts self-censored their products (which many analysts said occurred), by not including analysis that was contrary to the operator's assessments or (2) only uncorroborated reports that fit the running assessment were included in products. This also does not comport with ICD 203 and appropriate intelligence tradecraft.

ICD 203 (2015) describes one Analytic Tradecraft Standard as “incorporates analysis of alternatives,” which is the:

Systematic evaluation of differing hypotheses to explain events or phenomena, explore near-term outcomes, and imagine possible futures to mitigate surprise and risk. Analytic products should identify and assess plausible alternative hypotheses...products should address factors such as associated assumptions, likelihood, or implications related to U.S. interests. ... [and] identify indicators that, if detected, would affect the likelihood of identified alternatives.⁹⁶

JP 2-0 emphasizes that intelligence organizations must develop multiple courses of action for adversaries and other relevant actors to help leaders and organizations understand the range of possible actions. It recommends ways to improve the quality of analysis, including collaboration, competitive analysis, and the use of a red team. In competitive analysis, “multiple teams use different or competing hypotheses to analyze the same intelligence problem.” These teams can be different groups of analysts or a formal, designated red team.

JP 1-02 defines a red team as “an organizational element comprised of trained and educated members that provide an independent capability to fully explore alternatives in plans and operations in the context of the operational environment and from the perspective of adversaries and others.”

The 2006 CJCS Execution Order for JIOCs stated:

Each JIOC shall routinely employ red teams [see JP 5-0] to address the commander’s most pressing intelligence and operational issues from alternative perspectives, to include assumptions, second-order effects, intended outcomes, and information operations through anticipated adversaries’ perspectives.

The guidance in the 2011 modification of the CJCS Execution Order for JIOCs reduced this requirement, stating, “Each JIOC shall routinely employ red teams [see JP 5-0].”

⁹⁶ ICD 203 (2015) states “analytic products should identify and assess plausible alternative hypotheses. This is a change to the previous version of this ICD (valid before January 2, 2015) which included the phrase “where appropriate.” ICD 203 requires alternatives to be considered during product development. It is particularly important that products include analysis of alternatives when major judgments must contend with significant uncertainties, or complexity (e.g. forecasting future trends), or when low probability events could produce high-impact results.”

JP 5-0 elaborates on the red teaming process and how it supports planning. JP 5-0 also notes how red teams are distinct from red cells inside J2 staffs that support counterintelligence and security efforts by emulating the enemy.

According to a CCJ2 staff director, USCENTCOM established its Red Team inside the J2 Plans section in 2005. Its function was to provide alternative analysis to support planning efforts.⁹⁷ It was not part of JICCENT's analytical efforts. In summer 2013, the CCJ2 diverted its members to other planning efforts, and the red team was disbanded. It was never part of any OIR production.⁹⁸

Since CCJ2 did not have a standing red team or red cell during OIR, it needed other ways to do alternative analysis. During a crisis, there is limited time for full use of red teams or competitive analysis, but JP 2-0 suggests a suitable approach "where competitive analysis is unfeasible, analysts should brainstorm all possible hypotheses with other analysts to gain different perspectives." JP 2-0 also recommends analysis of alternatives to counter adversary deception and surprise, "intelligence analysts must confirm their analysis using multiple and proven analytical methods and processes (e.g., use of red teams, devil's advocates, alternative hypotheses)."

One divisional leader noted that although final products generally had only one enemy course of action, analysts routinely discussed various courses of action during white board sessions at analyst levels with representatives from multiple branches: "we'd have a whole task force there and it happened every week. ... and we'd white board all the alternative analysis. But you can't send up to the commander seven different views on what you think the enemy's going to do. You give him what you think is best." In mid-2015, MG Grove began round table sessions with analysts on particular topics once a week. These round table sessions were "a free-flowing discussion, much like [analysts previously did as an internal process] at the white board, but it was done at [MG Grove's] level."

Both the analysts' white board sessions and MG Grove's roundtable sessions with analysts, which only started in late 2015, are ways to consider alternatives and meet ICD 203's intent. However, USCENTCOM's counter-ISIL intelligence products generally contained only one enemy course of action and did not present other possible futures. This can limit analysts

⁹⁷ The JICCENT's red team focused on support to planning, as outlined by JP 5-0, not a red cell to support intelligence functions.

⁹⁸ This investigation did not review other USCENTCOM elements, such as the J3 and J5, to determine how they are or should be using red teams. However, we have included a recommendation for the Joint Staff, based on the CJCS Execute Order that requires JIOCs to routinely employ red teams, to determine if USCENTCOM is appropriately using red teams as required by the Execute Order.

and consumers of the intelligence to comparing every piece of evidence with only the running estimate.

Had USCENTCOM more-prominently reviewed and discussed multiple enemy courses of action and included them in products, it would have provided a stronger framework within which to fully evaluate and explain intelligence reports, while protecting against bias. For example, an unconfirmed single-source report that did not fit the running assessment could still be compared and briefed with respect to other courses of action, along with appropriate source description and statement on likelihood.

Recommendations (Single Source / Operational Reporting / Analysis of Alternatives)

22. USCENTCOM intelligence leaders should avoid stating or implying any blanket policy that eliminates or reduces sources of intelligence, especially in crisis situations where there may be poor clarity and limited sources.

23. Intelligence analysts should use ICD 206 standards and complete source descriptions to document and provide appropriate context for sources.

24. CCJ2 leaders should emphasize the rapid dissemination of force protection information, even if it is unconfirmed single-source information.

25. Joint Staff should determine if USCENTCOM is appropriately employing red teams, as required in Modification 3 to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Execute Order for JIOCs.⁹⁹

26. CCJ2 leaders should require that intelligence analysis present multiple enemy courses of action, when feasible, to encourage comparison and evaluation of reports.

⁹⁹ CJCS, "Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD) Modification 3, 040001Z OCT 11.

D. Friendly Force Assessment

Between June 2014 and late 2014, the CCJ2 was the primary source for information on the ISF. This is traditionally an operational responsibility. Since there was no subordinate joint task force in Iraq in the first few months of the counter-ISIL campaign, the CCJ2 became the lead for reporting on the ISF, including assessment of ISF capacity. This presented several challenges.

JP 3-0 defines assessment as “a process that evaluates changes in the environment and measures progress of the joint force toward mission accomplishment.” Commanders develop critical information requirements to support assessment, and staffs monitor and report changes and answers in their status. JP 3-0 also notes that “Normally, the operations directorate of a joint staff (J-3), assisted by the intelligence directorate of a joint staff (J-2), is responsible for coordinating assessment.” It also states, “As a general rule, the level at which a specific operation, task, or action is directed should be the level at which such activity is assessed.”

GEN Austin noted to us the benefits of having both intelligence and operational channels report on the ISF, as it gave him a more complete understanding of their capacity and the situation. Initially, J2 provided almost all of this assessment on the ISF. MG Grove did not have a good explanation for how the CCJ2 became the lead for reporting ISF functions, other than “I don’t know the answer, because nobody else was doing it.”

This not only taxed the already busy JICCENT with additional responsibilities but also placed CCJ2 personnel in a difficult position. They were supposed to conduct this assessment from Tampa, Florida, on ISF when coalition forces were on the ground with ISF in Iraq. Mr. Rizzio was surprised because “Traditionally in war time, friendly forces are reported by the Ops channels ... we ended up reporting both the green [ISF] and the red [ISIL] forces, which again was a challenge, and the guidance that they gave us verbally on at least one occasion was ‘be objective and be balanced.’”

This approach continued after the CJTF-OIR became operational (in October-November 2014). Another JICCENT leader described a subsequent effect:

We have U.S. Forces on the ground, we have U.S. general officers on the ground, training and advising the Iraqi Security Forces. So when you ask an intel analyst then to do an assessment of the ISF, essentially what you [are] doing is you are asking me to do an assessment on how well [the OIR Commander], or the OSC-I Commander, or the first ID commander, are doing at getting the ISF to do their job. That doesn't happen anywhere else. You never ask an intel guy to assess an OPS guy abilities. You ask the intel guy how bad is the enemy, you let the OPS guy do the assessment on how good the OPS guys are doing. There was no J3 assessments in any of this. ... The J3 didn't do OPS assessments and because of that it fell then to the JIC, to the intel analyst, to say here is what the Iraqi forces security forces are doing. And we would almost always get beat up.

A JICCENT senior leader also noted that the CCJ2 was still providing ISF status as of late May/early June 2016. This continued approach presented a challenge for CCJ2 leaders and JICCENT because their intelligence information was challenged by forward commanders repeatedly. This created additional motivation to require analysts to attempt to confirm assessments with deployed units before briefing the assessment and it added to the perception that operational information trumped intelligence reports.

Recommendations

27. USCENTCOM should evaluate its current and future operational assessment approach to ensure that it appropriately involves J3, J2, and other elements in an appropriate capacity.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ See JP 3-0, "Joint Operations," August 11, 2011, Paragraph II.6.e(1).

E. Balance of the Intelligence Effort

Combatant command J2s must simultaneously support specific crises and their commander's standing intelligence production requirements. This is much easier when there is an established, subordinate element that can serve as the lead production center for the crisis. Before a crisis occurs, J2s and supporting JIOCs should have a written concept of operations plan for future crises, known as a pre-crisis plan. In these plans, J2s can establish tentative, working priorities to use during a crisis and have planning assumptions on those routine production requirements that will continue as normal, be reduced in scope, eliminated, or out-sourced to another organization. A pre-crisis plan could also include a federated intelligence concept to harness Intelligence Community members, other components, reserve forces, or other organizations to assume production for pre-coordinated, specific JICCENT requirements during a crisis. This would position JICCENT to focus support to a crisis, while supporting organizations would assist with long-term production.

JP 2-0 states, "During most joint operations, [joint force commanders] will require federated support from the intelligence community (IC) to develop a full understanding of the [operational environment]." It further describes intelligence federation as enabling combatant commands:

To form support relationships with other theater JIOCs, Service intelligence centers, [joint reserve intelligence centers], or other DOD intelligence organizations to assist with the accomplishment of the joint force's mission. These support relationships, called federated partnerships, are preplanned agreements (formalized in operation plans [OPLANs], national intelligence support plans, or memorandums of agreement) intended to provide a rapid, flexible, surge capability enabling personnel from throughout the IC to assist the CCMD while remaining at their normal duty stations.

Many of the problems identified in this investigation became clear in October 2014, roughly 90 to 120 days after the onset of the counter-ISIL campaign. As previously discussed, we believe that various factors contributed to these problems, including frequent rotations of personnel detailed to the IFC, stress from prolonged surge and shift work, and increased daily production.

In addition to ineffective communication, no after-action reviews on crisis production or procedures were conducted before January 2015. A common theme in our interviews was that the organization was working at maximum capacity to produce the daily crisis products. However, an up-front investment of time to do a thorough after-action review after 30–45 days of supporting a crisis operation could have identified ways to streamline operations, increase communication, explain the reasons for changes, eliminate confusion, and increase effectiveness of the intelligence process.

Recommendations

28. The CCJ2 should issue a written order during future crises to activate the IFC and codify crisis guidance. This should include any changes to standing production priorities and product approval process, and if applicable, activation of the intelligence federation plan.

29. Finally, we recommend that senior leaders in the responsible organization review this report, and the facts described in it, with regard to the overall performance of the individuals described in this report. As stated earlier, we do not believe that anyone intentionally attempted to falsify, delay, suppress, or distort intelligence, or that anyone committed misconduct. However, we also described CCJ2 processes that were deficient and that should have been improved. We therefore believe that responsible officials should consider this report – the problems we describe, the overall challenges and duties of the individuals involved, their wide range of responsibilities extending beyond the counter-ISIL campaign, and the mitigating factors that are also described in this report – to assess their overall performance related to the issues and deficiencies we describe in this report. We recognize that these events occurred in prior years, before the current performance period. Yet, now that our investigation is complete, and the facts are laid out in this report, we believe that the responsible officials should consider the full record of this report, and any other relevant factors, to assess the individuals' overall performance during the time period of our review.

VIII. LIST OF DoD OIG RECOMMENDATIONS

1. USCENTCOM intelligence leaders should find ways to sustain a reasonable presence at JICCEN and to provide direct feedback, especially during crisis work. CCJ2 leadership should continue to implement methods to communicate with the entire workforce across work locations and shifts, such as brown bag lunches, town halls, anonymous suggestion boxes (physical or virtual), and sessions with analysts, immediate supervisors, and middle managers.

2. CCJ2 leaders should communicate feedback, guidance, and intent in a variety of techniques and settings, and verify that the message is reaching the analysts. Leaders should also verify that their direction was received and understood.

3. CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders should provide guidance for subordinates to raise any ethical dilemmas or suspected improprieties. Leaders should communicate this to new arrivals and periodically reinforce with their entire force. They should also consider developing anonymous means, such as email, suggestion box, or Ombudsman, for analysts to raise concerns about analytical integrity.

4. The CCJ2 should implement after-action reviews with JICCEN analysts and intermediate managers to professionally assess intelligence production, provide feedback, and identify ways to improve.

5. USCENTCOM should update and maintain its JICCEN standard operating procedures to ensure that they accurately reflect current JICCEN manning and organizational changes, and that they identify the IFC mission, roles, and responsibilities in crisis operations. The procedures should include any differences for crises, including product review procedures or production priorities.

6. USCENTCOM should communicate the reasons for organizational changes, such as the activation of the IFC, so that they are understood by JICCEN employees.

7. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should provide an overview of the Intelligence Fusion Center and Crisis SOP concepts to new employees to better prepare them for contingencies.

8. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should provide training for employees identified to serve in IFC on crisis procedures, including product lines and review process.

9. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should conduct, record, and follow up on after-action reviews for each IFC activation or exercise.

10. JICCEN should consider developing analyst exchanges with other intelligence organizations to increase familiarity with tactical intelligence production and requirements.

11. The relationship, reporting responsibilities, and intelligence requirements that apply to DIA analysts detailed to combatant commands should be clarified, in writing, so that DIA employees and their supervisors clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

12. The DIA should provide new JICCEN personnel clear instructions on their direct support relationship with USCENCOM, including what analytical standards apply and who sets JICCEN priorities and reporting requirements.

13. USCENCOM should consider adding a USCENCOM overview to its newcomer orientation that includes the area of responsibility, key priorities, operational plans, and priority intelligence requirements so analysts can better understand what is relevant to their audience.

14. The CCJ2 should provide new JICCEN personnel with a briefing to introduce J2 leaders, stress the integrity of the analytical process, and explain any tailored procedures, references (such as JP 1-02, service publications), and style guides. The CCJ2 should include any specific local guidance on product reviews, coordination, and approval, and explain the importance of feedback and being open to criticism. The CCJ2 should consider discussing the commander's preferences for intelligence, where intelligence is briefed, and coalition considerations.

15. JICCEN should highlight any local style guides or military terminology that supplements the DIA Style Guide. It should provide sample products to guide and teach analysts to tailor their writing for combatant command consumers. It should identify any references for military terminology that analysts should use, such as JP 1-02 and Service publications.

16. CCJ2 and JICCEN leaders should provide clearer guidance and feedback to the analysts on how intelligence products are reviewed and considered above the JICCEN level. JICCEN should incorporate additional training to address any trends or systemic deficiencies identified in intelligence products.

17. The USD(I) should track and follow up on the DIA's training and certification of all DIA employees serving at USCENCOM.

18. The CCJ2 and JICCEN should jointly assess the production process for crisis products and develop written, specific policy that explains what crisis products senior intelligence leaders will review and the rationale for this specialized review.

19. Joint Staff should update JP 2-0 to bring it into compliance with the 2015 version of ICD 203. The Expressions of Uncertainties in Appendix A and Figure A-1. should match the ICD 203's expressions of likelihood or probability (Para D.6.e.(2)(a)).

20. The DIA should identify and explain the function of the Ombudsman, and JICCENT should explain the function of the Analytical Review Team to new analysts so they know who to contact with tradecraft concerns.

21. The CCJ2 should issue written guidance to intelligence analysts to distinguish the difference between “collaboration” and “coordination,” and who is authorized to conduct each. The CCJ2 should consider whether to delegate authority for coordination in specified circumstances.

22. USCENTCOM intelligence leaders should avoid stating or implying any blanket policy that eliminates or reduces sources of intelligence, especially in crisis situations where there may be poor clarity and limited sources.

23. Intelligence analysts should use ICD 206 standards and complete source descriptions to document and provide appropriate context for sources.

24. CCJ2 leaders should emphasize the rapid dissemination of force protection information, even if it is unconfirmed single-source information.

25. Joint Staff should determine if USCENTCOM is appropriately employing red teams, as required in Modification 3 to the CJCS EXORD for JIOCs.¹⁰¹

26. CCJ2 leaders should require that intelligence analysis include analysis of alternatives. Consider requiring multiple courses of action, when feasible, to encourage comparison and evaluation of reports.

27. USCENTCOM should evaluate its current and future operational assessment approach to ensure that it appropriately involves J3, J2, and other elements in an appropriate capacity.¹⁰²

28. The CCJ2 should issue a written order during future crises to activate IFC and codify crisis guidance. This should include any changes to standing production priorities and product approval process, and if applicable, activation of the intelligence federation plan.

29. We recommend that senior leaders in the responsible organization review this report, the facts described in it, and any other relevant factors to assess the overall performance of the individuals described in this report during the time period of this investigation.

¹⁰¹ CJCS, “Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) Execute Order (EXORD) Modification 3, 040001Z OCT 11.

¹⁰² See JP 3-0, “Joint Operations,” August 11, 2011, Paragraph II.6.e(1).

IX. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In this investigation, we sought to thoroughly examine the full range of serious allegations raised by the complainants and other witnesses regarding whether USCENTCOM senior officials falsified, distorted, delayed, or suppressed intelligence products. We found strongly held views on both sides, with many witnesses believing that intelligence was distorted, many others rejecting those allegations, and the subjects adamantly denying it.

To examine these allegations fully, in addition to the many witness interviews we conducted, we collected and reviewed the massive amount of draft and final intelligence products produced by USCENTCOM's CCJ2 relating to the counter-ISIL campaign during the time period this investigation covered (from May 2014 to September 2015). We reviewed millions of emails. We also examined in detail the specific examples of alleged falsification, distortion, suppression, or delay that were raised by the witnesses. Each of those examples needed an investigation in and of itself, requiring us to determine, for example, what was changed in the intelligence products at issue and why.

In addition, to more fully investigate these serious allegations, we interviewed other officials in the DoD and the Intelligence Community for their assessments of USCENTCOM's intelligence products.

We also conducted a systematic analysis regarding the direction of edits that were made within the CCJ2 on counter-ISIL products. In this analysis, we reviewed a statistically random sample of 140 CCJ2 products, including every individual edit between the initial and final versions of those products. We sought to determine systematically whether there were any trends in the direction of those edits, and whether those edits made ISIL look less successful and the ISF more successful, as raised in the allegations.

We did not stop there. We also reviewed command climate reports and interviewed witnesses about the command climate. In addition, we examined the management processes for producing intelligence products in the CCJ2, and we provide 28 recommendations for improving those management processes, as well as one accountability recommendation.

In sum, as this report discusses in detail in Part VI.A., we did not substantiate the most serious allegation, which was that intelligence was falsified. Only a few witnesses described intelligence assessments as false, and they did not provide specific examples that supported the allegation. Specifically, they did not point out, and we did not find, specific intelligence products that contained false – untrue – facts or analysis. We also did not find evidence to conclude that the CCJ2 or its leaders attempted to change intelligence to make it factually untrue. Nor did we find that they presented, or allowed to be presented, any intelligence assessments that they did not believe were accurate.

The more difficult matter to investigate was the allegation that CCJ2 intelligence was distorted – or skewed – to portray counter-ISIL operations in a rosier light, or to show that ISF was stronger and ISIL weaker than the intelligence warranted. We found much greater difference of testimony on this allegation. In our investigation we found a strong perception among many intelligence analysts who worked on USCENTCOM Operation INHERENT RESOLVE intelligence products that CCJ2 leaders were attempting to distort the intelligence products, either through excessive editing, imposition of a narrative, requiring a higher burden of proof for “bad news,” or demanding additional sourcing requirements if the intelligence indicated that ISIL was doing well or ISF was struggling. That widespread perception alone indicated a significant problem, which we found the CCJ2 leaders failed to adequately address in a timely way.

However, when we analyzed the full scope of the testimony, both by USCENTCOM analysts and leaders, and by other intelligence officials outside USCENTCOM; reviewed the specific examples provided by the complainants and the witnesses regarding alleged distortion; searched over 17 million documents and files and 2 million emails for evidence of distortion; and conducted our own analytic assessment of a sample of intelligence products, we did not substantiate that CCJ2 leaders intended to distort intelligence products or that their changes to intelligence products resulted in a false narrative or systematic distortion of intelligence. Similarly, we did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations that CCJ2 leadership suppressed intelligence, or that they attempted to delay intelligence products for improper purposes.

It is important to note that we did find, based primarily on our analytical sample, the testimony of some members of the Intelligence Community, and the testimony of some analysts, some basis for the analysts’ perception of distortion, and we understand how they arrived at this perception. For example, the testimony of some – but not all – of the witnesses from the Intelligence Community was that, while USCENTCOM intelligence products were not false, inaccurate, or outside reasonable boundaries, USCENTCOM OIR products were generally more positive about the impact of the ISF and its effect on ISIL than their own assessments.

Moreover, some witnesses described MG Grove as either direct, intense, a perfectionist, risk averse, or preferring high confidence intelligence products and greatly valuing the input of the operators on the ground. We believe this sometimes led to intelligence that was unconfirmed by operators not being included in intelligence products, rather than including the intelligence with appropriate caveats. We also believe that the analysts’ strong perceptions of distortion by their leaders led some of the analysts to “self-censor” their products and, therefore, some did not try to submit intelligence assessments that they believed conflicted with their perception of their leaders’ narrative.

During our investigation, we identified several specific weaknesses and flaws in the CCJ2 management processes for creating intelligence products, which we believe contributed to the widespread perception that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders were distorting intelligence to present a more positive view of the success of the ISF and a more negative view of the success of ISIL. We also believe deficiencies in these processes, such as ineffective communication and guidance, lack of adequate feedback, ambiguity and uncertainty about certain CCJ2 policies, and the ambiguous status of DIA analysts assigned to USCENTCOM, hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of the CCJ2 and JICCENT, as well as affected the morale of the analytical workforce.

For example, our review concluded that more effective communication and feedback throughout the organization, improved written policies and guidance, and better application of analytical tradecraft, such as ICD 203's standard of incorporating analysis of alternatives, could have mitigated some of the conflict and concern about the CCJ2 intelligence products, as well as improved the intelligence production process.

The evidence showed that MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman inherited a difficult command climate within the CCJ2 when they arrived. There was a stressful environment, a rapid pace of work, workforce reductions, crisis production, and an ambiguous relationship of DIA intelligence analysts assigned to the combatant command. However, as reflected in the surveys and the witness testimony, the command climate deteriorated after MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman first arrived at the CCJ2. It has improved since the lowest point in 2014 because MG Grove and Mr. Ryckman eventually took some positive steps to address command climate issues within the CCJ2. More can, and should, be done. We therefore make 28 recommendations for further improvement in the intelligence processes that relate to the issues we investigated. Finally, we make one additional recommendation that senior leaders in the responsible organization review this report with regard to the overall performance of the individuals described in this report.

In short, we did not find systematic or intentional distortion of intelligence by CCJ2 leaders. We also did not conclude that anyone committed misconduct. However, we believe that the intelligence practices related to OIR intelligence products in the CCJ2 could have, and should have, been better, and further improvements can be made. We therefore urge the DoD, DIA, and USCENTCOM to take these recommendations seriously and to fully implement corrective action or to detail why such corrective action is not necessary or warranted. We believe that such actions can further improve intelligence processes and reduce the risk that allegations such as the ones at issue in this report will arise in the future.

Whistleblower Protection

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman's role is to educate agency employees about prohibitions on retaliation and employees' rights and remedies available for reprisal. The DoD Hotline Director is the designated ombudsman. For more information, please visit the Whistleblower webpage at www.dodig.mil/programs/whistleblower.

For more information about DoD IG reports or activities, please contact us:

Congressional Liaison

congressional@dodig.mil; 703.604.8324

Media Contact

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For Report Notifications

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