

The Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Mr William Pearcy Gp Capt (Ret)



4 August 2003

SUBMISSION 8.....

Dear Sir

INTERNAL HANDLING OF ORIGINAL INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS

My submission to the Inquiry relates to the handling of initial assessments of threats/capabilities as they are progressed through intelligence agencies to the final consumer.

It is my experience that initial assessments (made by the relevant 'desk' officer) often undergo significant change in tone during their progress up through an organization, depending on the disposition of the various reviewing officers. A simple example of changes might illustrate the point:

Originator/desk officer	'there is no evidence that
Section Head	'it is unlikely that'
Division Head	'it is unlikely, but possible that
Branch Head	'it is possible that'

Such changes are not incompatible, but they do alter the tone of an assessment.

I am not suggesting that the sequence of change usually follows this progression, nor that these changes result from a conscious bias. However, it is my experience that the final product assessment can be quite different in tone from the original one, which is made by the person who has the most current expertise.

I would suggest to the Inquiry that it not only take oral evidence from relevant persons but that it seek access to the relevant files in order to evaluate any such changes made to written assessments within an agency.

I am aware that some agencies, such as ONA, do not necessarily make assessments from raw data, but often use the assessments of other agencies as the basis for their own. Nevertheless, there will be an original assessment made within such an organization by the relevant officer.

Should the members of the Committee find this suggestion helpful, then a suitable recommendation of the Inquiry might be;

"That an initial assessment should be signed by the originator and remain unchanged as the basic document for any further processing. All suggested changes to the original assessment should be separately minuted and appended to that assessment by the reviewing officer."

Yours faithfully

W G Pearcy Coordinator of Service Intelligence / Joint Intelligence Agency 1981 -1983 (inc)
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