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An innovative new master's program in intelligence analysis aims to fill the urgent need for a new generation of imaginative leaders.

Kermit Tyler was a young army lieutenant with just one day's experience at the Fort Shafter Information Center when the call came. It was a sleepy Sunday morning on Oahu, Hawaii, and Tyler was commanding the 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. shift. Shortly after seven, radar operators on the northern tip of the island called in to say they were registering "a huge number of planes" coming in from the north. It was like nothing they'd ever seen before.

In 1941, radar was a new invention, incapable of discerning friend from foe. Tyler was unaware that just half an hour earlier the U.S. destroyer Ward had sighted and sunk an enemy submarine headed toward Pearl Harbor. He also did not know that as far back as 1924 the War Department had surmised if an attack against Pearl Harbor was launched, it would likely come from the north in the early morning hours.

What he did know was that driving into work that morning he'd been able to listen to Hawaiian music on KGMB, when usually the station was off-air at those hours. He also knew that inbound B-17s used the radio signals for guidance, so when the music played all night a flight of B-17s was due. Tyler surmised the incoming planes were just that.

"Don't worry about it," he told the radar corps. "It's OK."

It was a classic example of the information analyst's dilemma: Which pieces of the puzzle matter most? And what pieces not currently at hand would make the picture look entirely different?

Ever since the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government, and in particular its military, has devoted enormous resources to acquire, and then understand and use, important information about America's real and potential enemies. Acquisition of information is the realm of spies and their gear: satellite photos, electronic eavesdropping, code breaking, and secret agents. Deciding how to use the information is the prerogative of the politicians.

But the intermediate step—how to make sense of all the information once it's collected—is, say experts, in many ways the greatest challenge of all. This is the realm of intelligence analysis, where quiet individuals in often times obscure offices are called upon to inform or, as in the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, drive government policy.

The importance of such analysis became achingly clear in the wake of September 11. By the time the

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now famous *9/11 Commission Report* made headlines in July 2004, Public Safety Leadership faculty and staff at the School of Professional Studies in Business and Education were already at work designing a new degree program in intelligence analysis—a program aimed at filling the urgent need for a new generation of imaginative leadership and management.

"What we've come up with is something different, it's one of the very few degrees of its type in the entire country," says Sheldon Greenberg, director of the Division of Public Safety Leadership. "We've learned a few important things in our other programs that apply to intelligence analysis leadership especially well."

The new Master of Science in Intelligence Analysis degree program expects to enroll its first students later this year. It will offer a new approach to the advanced training of intelligence analysts, based upon the highly successful models developed in the school's Public Safety Executive Leadership Program and its Executive Leadership Program for the U.S. Secret Service.

"One thing that distinguishes us is that we don't teach process," says Greenberg. "In all these programs we work with mid-career officers who already know their craft. We are building on the skills they have already achieved, and helping them take their mastery to the next level."

That "next level" in intelligence analysis anticipates a corps of innovative and broad-based thinkers who can help leaders and policy makers discern genuine threats to American security and identify possible remedies available. They will have to think outside of the box, act in concert with their peers in other government agencies, and develop useful information that can lead to concrete government actions.

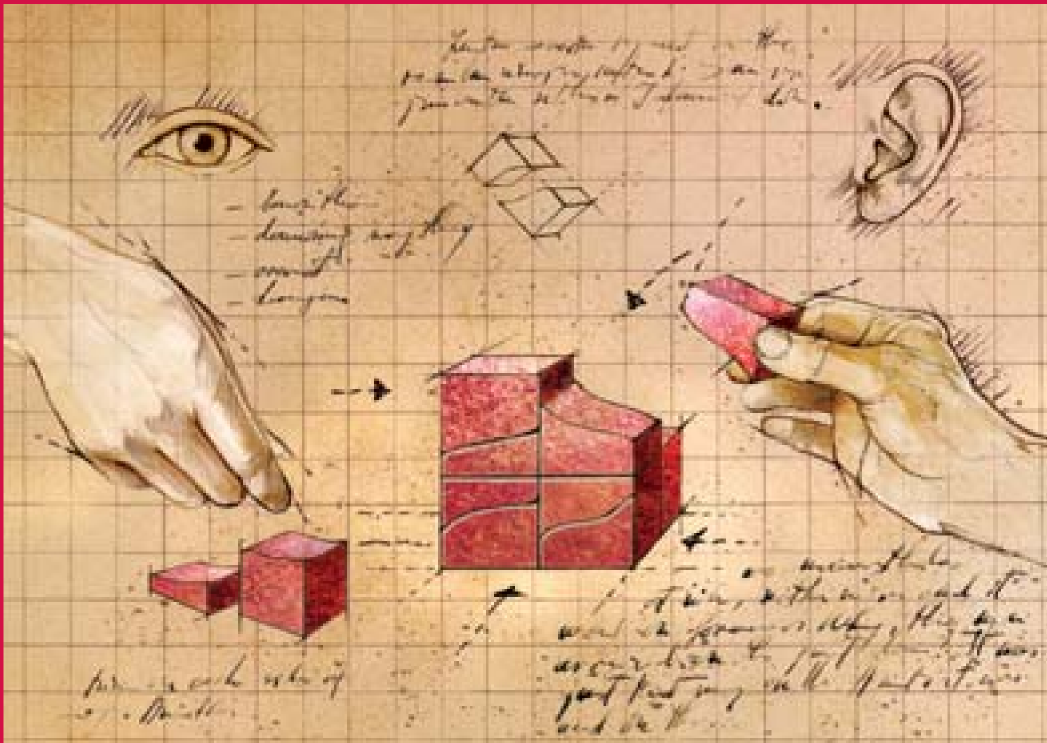
All of which is easier said than done.

"Doing intelligence analysis is like trying to drive down the highway by looking in the rearview mirror," says Miguel Ferrer, director of Outreach and Development within the School of Professional Studies' Public Safety Leadership programs. "It's a very difficult task to perform, as much art as science."

Which is why, perhaps, it is a field as often noted for its failures as its success. In response to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government determined never again to be hit by surprise. After the war, in 1947, President Truman created the Central Intelligence Agency against enormous interdepartmental resistance. The new agency was to be the government's primary source of foreign intelligence analysis, and a credible foe to the vaunted and much-feared Soviet KGB. Yet as critics of the CIA like to point out, the difficulty of accurate intelligence analysis was in no way lessened by a president's bureaucratic fiat.

In the decades that followed, the American intelligence community failed to warn the president of the invasion of South Korea by the North, or of the subsequent entry of China into the war. It missed the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It gravely underestimated popular support for the Castro government at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and failed to predict the Shah's downfall in 1979. It was surprised by the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive of 1968, and by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a decade later; by the detonation of India's nuclear bomb; and the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was blindsided by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut. It failed to anticipate Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, or the terrorist attacks against American military bases in Saudi Arabia, U.S. embassies in Africa, and the U.S.S. Cole.

And then came September 11. "Internal terrorism really changed the landscape," says Jack A. Davis, a Marine Corps major general who retired in November of last year. "Because now non-nation-state actors can inflict horrific damage and operate in ways different from what we've been able to encounter in the past. The way we fight has to change, and to do that we have to revisit our intelligence operation—both what we do and how we do it—to achieve better intelligence capabilities."



Tom Frazier, a former Baltimore City police chief who served active duty in Vietnam as a lieutenant in Army Intelligence in the Mekong Delta, has his own ideas about the changes that need to occur.

"Knowledge is power. The history is that you write it to classify it, not to share it," says Frazier, who now heads the PSL-based Major Cities Police Chiefs Association.

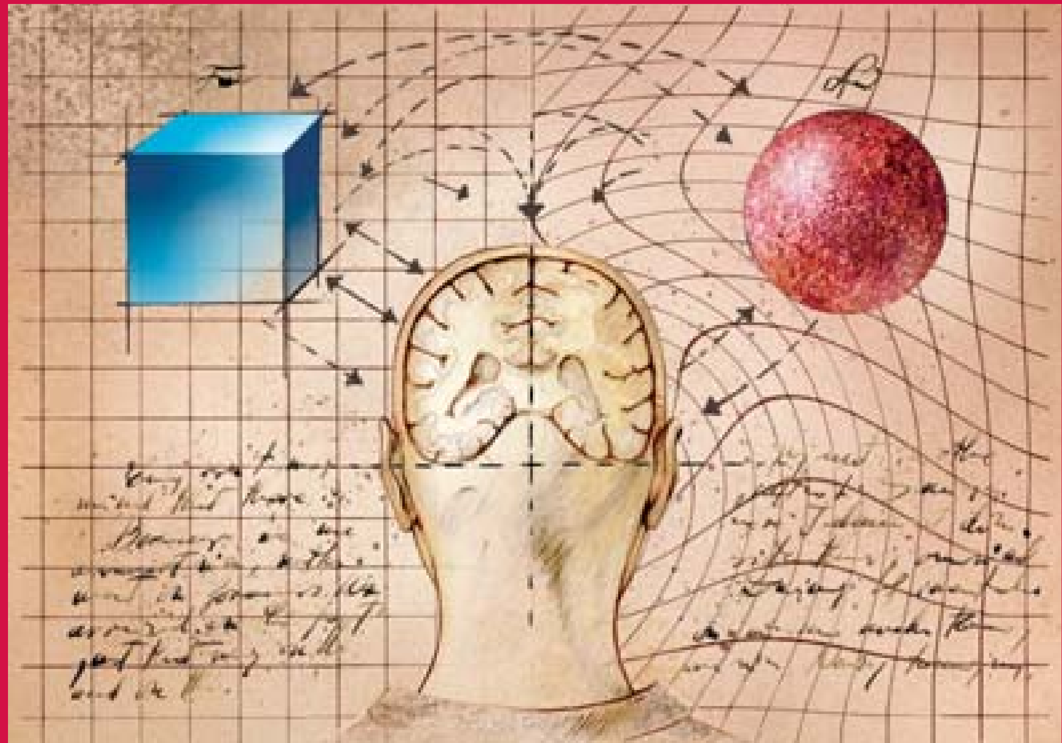
"Do you know what a 'tear line' is?" he asks by way of example. "In a typical intelligence report you write in such a way that your sources and methods of collection are protected. These are your observations and recommendations for the policy people, and they get put on the bottom half of the paper, below the dotted line. Up above, you put 'here is how we got the information.' But you tear along the dotted line and only distribute the bottom half." The problem, says Frazier, is that intelligence analysts are typically more inclined to keep all their important work above the tear line.

"It's a constant source of frustration, the reluctance of analysts to part with information," he says. "It's a very turfy kind of environment and those who have the information are not used to sharing it. The trouble is, important information that stays classified is information that in the long run no one can use."

This defect in intelligence management was a glaring problem highlighted by the *9/11 Commission Report,* which complained: "The [intelligence] agencies are like a set of specialists in a hospital, each ordering tests, looking for symptoms, and prescribing medications. What is missing is the attending physician who makes sure they work as a team."

To encourage more team playing, the new master's program in Intelligence Analysis will train cohorts of about two dozen intelligence analysts drawn from different agencies who are at different points in their careers. Each cohort will remain together for all class work and independent projects throughout the two-year length of the course. This is the signature approach of the Division of Public Safety Leadership, and has been found to be highly successful in its other course offerings, breaking students out of jurisdictional pigeonholes to freely exchange information, perspectives, and ways of doing things with colleagues from throughout the region.

"The cohort system is simple but brilliant," exclaims international business consultant and School of Professional Studies advisory board member Tom Katana. A former Navy SEAL team commander, Katana's experiences leading units of the U.S. military's elite special forces give him a unique insight into the importance and the challenges of effective intelligence analysis. "The analysis piece is the most frustrating," he says. "It's an art and a science tethered together. The science is being broad enough in perspective to capture and understand crucial differences in data. The art is being able to imagine and articulate what those changes are likely to mean."



Katana believes the cohort system, by exposing students to peers in other agencies assessing other kinds of information, is most likely to give analysts the kind of broad perspective needed to make the imaginative associations that can provide real insight. "The long-term potential impact is that people across departments and across agencies will begin to connect to create a more integrated intelligence workforce. That's huge."

Experience shows that the cohort system also promotes collegiality and trust, which can be a crucial advantage in times of crisis, as for instance, in 2002 when the Beltway Snipers were terrorizing large sections of Northern Virginia and Southern Maryland. "The thing that was incredible in the sniper case was that as soon as it became evident it was an inter-jurisdictional event, the commander of the state police contingent arrived on the scene to be greeted by the assistant police chief of the Montgomery County Police [where the shootings originated] and they were actual SPSBE classmates from the same police leadership cohort," says Greenberg. "There was instant camaraderie and trust, and no barriers. To be frank, one of the things cohorts do is remove the egos, to allow you to get to the work at hand."

The two forces quickly coordinated a plan in which some of the time, state officers held stationary posts at schools and other key points while county officers, with their more intimate knowledge of the area, worked patrols. "If they didn't know each other or trust each other," says Greenberg, "there would have been distrust and distancing, and one side or the other would have balked."

Students in the intelligence analysis cohort will all be working professionals. The two-year, 42-credit degree program will consist of full days of classes on Saturdays and culminate in a student-led capstone case project of direct relevance to intelligence analysis. In the course of the program the cohort will take classes on subjects ranging from ethics and society to strategic thinking, leadership, management, information technology, and communications. A strong focus on writing and presentation skills will be augmented by additional work in the creative arts.

Poet and Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars professor John Irwin, who has been involved in the program's design, believes the arts might help provide precisely the kind of imaginative thinking deemed absent by the *9/11 Commission Report:* "There are different kinds of creative thinking, such as writing a poem, and the way you respond to an act of imagination is with imagination. When you creatively read a poem you are engaged in an imaginative process that calls upon all sorts of disparate information. It's a way of thinking that could be helpful to intelligence analysis."

If terrorism, in its way, is an act of powerful yet terrible imagination, then it is easy to see how intelligence analysts

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"Really this is about how to be a good story teller," says Ferrer. "If you can't be compelling in a 20-minute presentation, it doesn't matter how good your analysis is."

must be ready to think imaginatively in response. Yet bravely imaginative thinking is not usually expected from a GS 14-level civil servant in a cubicle. Noted the *9/11 Commission Report* dryly: "Imagination is not a gift associated with bureaucracies." How then can individuals in routinized work environments be encouraged and even expected to offer daring flights of imagination? Is it even possible?

"The concern that there was a failure of imagination is what really caught our attention in the *9/11 Commission Report,*" says Jim Giza, coordinator of the Master of Science in Intelligence Analysis program. "They wrote that it is crucial for the government to find a way—and this is a quote—'of routinizing, even bureaucratizing, the exercise of imagination.' We saw that as our jumping-off point."

Giza is a retired Baltimore City police sergeant who spent 24 years on the force. He looks the part. Spare and compact, he wears his gray hair neatly trimmed and presents himself as a man who can see right through any nonsense—and won't take it from anyone. But his speech is hardly the stuff of the inner city precinct house. "The focus of the program is to develop a critical imaginative paradigm or world view," he declares. "We want to get people thinking outside their own skin." His enthusiasm is hard to resist.

"This degree program is all about thinking, about processing information," he says. "It's not about teaching you what's going on in China. But built into the program is the opportunity to begin to take fresh approaches to your work on China or Iran or pandemics and so forth." Giza joined the Division of Public Safety in 1999 as a program assistant in the Police Executive Leadership Program. He used what he learned and saw in the police cohorts to help inform the design of the Intelligence Analysis program. "You don't want to reinvent the wheel when you already have an outstanding record of success."

The Police Executive Leadership Program has been notably successful in exposing students to new ways of thinking about their jobs and their whole approach to public safety. Giza is convinced the new Intelligence Analysis program will offer similar benefits in a field especially in need of a little shaking up. "We have to overcome the cult of the expert," is how he describes it. "In a line of work that is so bureaucratically entrenched, it's hard to introduce differing lines of thought." Then he adds with a grin: "Maybe it's a need for more people with green hair."

"Intelligence analysts are a different breed of animal," agrees Miguel Ferrer, who worked together with Giza in envisioning and outlining the new master's degree program. "The 9/11 commission pointed out what is symptomatic: The fact is, these folks are not trained to be creative. They need to have strong analytical skills, which means they tend to be somewhat nerdy. They spend all of their time slicing and dicing data to provide a picture of what is going on. Usually it's the numbers that are emphasized. In an analytical profession, the job descriptions don't emphasize creativity."

At its core, the new master's program addresses this perceived shortcoming by a continuous emphasis on writing skills and, as John Irwin described, a special focus on creative writing. "Really this is about how to be a good storyteller," says Ferrer. "If you can't be compelling in a 20-minute presentation, it doesn't matter how good your analysis is. You need to be able to tell the story. You have to be able to take the data and find the story."

It may sound elementary, but in a dangerous and unpredictable world, finding the story is a critically urgent task. It means making sense of an unexpected, huge number of planes appearing on a radar screen, and puzzling out why a group of pilot trainees would want to learn how to fly a 747, but not land one. It is, ultimately, about creating leadership through vision.

"In the past," observes Giza, "intelligence analysis was a dead-end profession. It was a career that had no logical next step. We believe we can train intelligence analysts to be more assertive and take risks. We want to make them better at what they do, and help find the leaders that the *9/11 Commission Report* says are missing.

"Looking at the work we've done and are doing educating police chiefs and fire chiefs and Secret Service agents from around the country, we think we at Johns Hopkins have the horses to pull that train." ■