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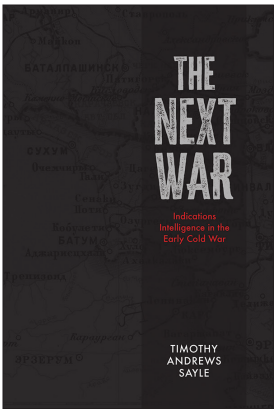

THE NEXT WAR: INDICATIONS INTELLIGENCE IN THE EARLY COLD WAR

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A Semi-Dormant but Continuing Agreement

In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the JIC finally made the previously planned updates for the Joint Indication Room Standing Orders, published as JIC 471(63) in June of 1963. The new orders took account of the JIR's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis. They underlined the need for more staff in a crisis.[1]

More change was to come. In 1965, the Intelligence Division of the Department of National Defence took over the twenty-four-hour watch function from Joint Staff.[2] A year later, a new document, "The Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement," JIC 543(66) (Final), now spelled out the procedures that the Current Intelligence, Indications and Briefing (CIIB) section, a part of the Intelligence Division, would serve the role previously played by the Joint Indications Room.[3]

Work on indicator lists continued. In 1960, a first "Missile Indicator List" was the subject of tripartite discussions, based on an initial indications list drawn up by the US NIC.[4] Other specific lists included "Intelligence Alert Indicator List: Critical Soviet Bloc Actions" and "Indications of Sino-Soviet Bloc Preparations for Early War." Indeed, by the mid-1960s, there was a "Tripartite Intelligence Alert Indicator List for Critical Asian Communist Actions" with indicators to help determine whether "an Asian Communist power is about to initiate or engage in international hostilities." The growing number of these lists was consistent with the 1959 expansion of the agreement, but it confirms that the Canadian wish and hunch that the agreement would take on a global nature had come to pass.[5]

Indeed, in 1965 the British pressed the American and Canadian allies (who both agreed) to show the "Asian" list to Australian and New Zealander

intelligence officials. It does not appear that Australia and New Zealand ever became formal members of the Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement, but documents from 1989 note that if the agreement was invoked, the Australians would also "normally be informed given that it is a member of the CAN/AUS/UK/US intelligence sharing agreement."[6]

And yet, despite the development of indicator lists, sharing of these lists to Australia and New Zealand, and an improvement of the communications network to allow "conferencing," 1966 marks the end of the active use of the system.[7] Tests continued every week. What had begun as bi-weekly tests were sent "thrice weekly" as of 1972, with a monthly report tracking the tests.[8] The allies still had an agreed "Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Indicator List" in the 1980s.[9] But according to a 1973 memorandum, no live alert message had been exchanged after 1966, and a CIA official described it as having entered a "semi-dormant stage."[10]

The lack of live alert messages likely reflected two broader trends. The first was a changing international system. While the Cold War would heat up again, including with major nuclear crises in the 1980s, the late 1960s ushered in a period of détente. The other shift was within the tripartite states themselves, and their growing systems for exchanging intelligence.

Both the UK and Canada were members of the American CRITICOMM network, which let Ottawa and London exchange "flash" messages with the CIA and other USIB members. CRITICOMM was also used on a daily basis to exchange intelligence. In 1970, partially because of this CRITICOMM connection, the US proposed cancelling the tripartite alerts communication system itself. (It should be kept in mind that there is no evidence that any party ever suggested doing away with the agreement; these were discussions instead about communications networks and systems.) But neither Canada nor the UK wanted to switch solely to CRITICOMM, which they feared would be overloaded in a crisis.[11]

In 1973, the British were finally willing to discontinue the existing communications system. The Canadians initially hesitated before agreeing to find a more "efficient way to implement [the] Alerts Agreement."[12] Nonetheless, later that year, Canada still maintained two "TRIAN" — Tripartite Intelligence Alert Network — terminals at National Defence buildings. One of the terminals was to be relocated to the new Canadian Intelligence Advisory Committee (IAC) secretariat offices in the East Block, in the old

External Affairs operations centre (and beside the External Affairs "satellite comcentre," which was staying in place.)[13]

The Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement continued to shape crisis procedures in Ottawa for the rest of the Cold War and into the post-Cold War era. In 1976, the IAC developed a document outlining "IAC Procedures in Crisis Situations." The first page of the document referenced the "Tripartite Intelligence Alert Agreement," and an annex includes a description of the agreement and the instructions for sending and communicating messages with London and Washington. These TIAA procedures, and Canada's obligations under the agreement, are an essential element of all IAC crisis procedure documents finalized in 1978, 1989, and 1991 — even after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[14] As recently as 2013, a "familiarization guide" prepared for the director general of intelligence of the Communications Security Establishment included a description of both the initial Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement and the subsequent expansion to expand the agreement to include warning of aggressive action outside of the NATO area.[15] There is no evidence that the TIAA has been cancelled.[16]

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The history of the Canadian "imminence of war" assessments is now available in released records. The first chapters of this book examined the diplomacy of these appreciations during the most dangerous period of the early Cold War. As the Cold War continued, the Canadians continued to work with their allies to assess the possibility that war, perhaps regional war, might come to the world. Canada continued to exchange JIC papers with the United Kingdom and the United States, but also Australia and New Zealand.[17] Readers will recognize these states as the "Five Eyes" intelligence community. And while the Five Eyes usually refers to a signals intelligence partnership between these countries, the imminence of war studies and the evolution of the Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement procedures make clear that this intelligence community developed into an assessment-sharing community early in the Cold War.

Despite the recent release of "imminence" records, a large number of records from the "indications" side of the ledger are yet to be released. Chapters four through six of this manuscript provide the outline of the agreement and

the communications systems put in place, and examine allied thinking about indications intelligence in general. Some information about when and how alerts were called has been released, but there is more research to be done in this area. As more documents are released, researchers will be able to better understand the role that alerts and the communications network played in how Canada and its allies understood and responded to Cold War crises.

The release of the records to support this project has been a long and tedious effort, filled with frustrations. And yet, the release of both "imminence" and "indications" records has been a success in that it has allowed for sustained scholarship in this area. Canada usually lags far behind the United States and the United Kingdom in declassifying historical records related to intelligence. In the case of the Tripartite Intelligence Alerts Agreement, Canada is ahead of its allies in releasing information. The historical understanding that can be gained from these releases is crucial to better understanding our present.

At the end of the Cold War, it might have seemed like imminence of war assessments and indications intelligence systems were purely a thing of the past. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States led to a surge in intelligence spending in Canada and allied countries, and the search for indicators of attack focused on a more granular level, with attention to individuals and terrorist groups. The 2020s, however, have reminded allied leaders that general war is not necessarily a relic of the past. With the return of war to Europe with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and growing tensions between the United States and the People's Republic of China, Canada and its allies must think once again about how best to assess the imminence of war.

There was no "War of 196?" like that described in the introduction to this book. That no third world war has yet occurred does not suggest general war will not come again. Indeed, and unfortunately, there is no time like the present to revisit and review the history of how Canada and its allies prepared to identify the imminence of war.