

Even the CIA report on the counterterrorism effort that was provided in response to a specific Joint Inquiry request required a manual reconstruction of hours worked, which is imprecise at best. Thus, the Agency could provide only limited information on how its officers [page 265] divided their time in 1998. A senior NSA official in testimony criticized personnel accounting procedures that focus only on one product line, such as counterterrorism, noting that cryptographers, target developers, and other personnel contribute to products even if they are not formally part of the product lines. However, NSA was unable to provide a procedure to account for the contributions of these personnel.

As a result of these ambiguities, the Community often does not know how much it spends on particular efforts, making it difficult to compare funding across missions. Moreover, different components of the Community use different measures to determine how much they spend on missions, and there is no universally accepted method to measure indirect costs such as infrastructure.

In light of these difficulties, the estimates of spending on counterterrorism that follow should be viewed as rough outlines, not detailed pictures of overall expenditures. Since counterterrorism is not an explicit budget category for the Intelligence Community, it is difficult to estimate the percentage of Community capabilities (e.g., field officers or spy satellites) dedicated to counterterrorism. Community budget officers advised that components of the Community use different measures to estimate total sums spent on counterterrorism and these measures are not consistently used within agencies. Finally, indirect costs (such as infrastructure or communications) are often excluded from these figures.

In addition to this data problem, the White House refused to allow the Intelligence Community to respond to Joint Inquiry requests for information regarding budgets and budgetary decision making. Many important resource issues revolved around the question of “Who said no?” to requests for additional funds for counterterrorism. However, the White House invoked Executive privilege and refused to permit the Intelligence Community to provide “pre-decisional” data on budget requests that were made by agencies before they were sent to Congress. The Joint Inquiry received some of this information indirectly, but large gaps remain. The White House also invoked Executive privilege in response to requests for information on spending for covert action.