

**PART ONE  
LOOKING BACK**





## **PART ONE: LOOKING BACK**

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The President asked this Commission to perform two tasks: to assess the intelligence capabilities of the United States with respect to weapons of mass destruction “and related threats” of the 21st century, and to recommend ways to improve those capabilities. Part One of this report details our findings in connection with the first of these two objectives.

In order to assess the Intelligence Community’s capabilities, we conducted a series of case studies that are reported in separate chapters of this report. Three of these case studies—Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan—concern countries that were specified by the President. Each provided an opportunity that is all too rare in the uncertain world of intelligence: namely, to compare what the Intelligence Community believed about a country’s unconventional weapons programs with the “ground truth.” With respect to Iraq, the President asked us to compare the Intelligence Community’s pre-war assessments about Iraq’s weapons programs with the post-war findings of the Iraq Survey Group—and to analyze why the pre-war assessments were so mistaken. He also instructed us to perform similar “before and after” reviews of the Intelligence Community’s performance in assessing the unconventional weapons programs of Libya before its government’s decision to forfeit them, and of Afghanistan before the Operation Enduring Freedom military campaign. The first three chapters of this report detail our findings on each of these countries.

The Executive Order establishing this Commission also asked us to look for lessons beyond those provided by our reviews of these three countries, instructing us to examine the Intelligence Community’s capabilities with respect to the threats posed by weapons of mass destructions in the hands of terrorists and in “closed societies.” In response to these directives, we have examined the Intelligence Community’s progress in improving its counterterrorism capabilities since the September 11 attacks. We also looked at the qual-

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ity of our intelligence on the nuclear weapons programs of North Korea and Iran, although we regret that we are unable to discuss our findings in an unclassified format.

In sum, we include four of these case studies in this report—Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and Terrorism—and we draw heavily upon the lessons we learned from all of them in proposing recommendations for change in Part Two of this report. These case studies are not the only basis for our recommendations, however. We also reviewed the Intelligence Community’s current capabilities with respect to other critical countries—such as China and Russia—and examined special challenges facing the Intelligence Community, such as that of integrating intelligence across the foreign-domestic divide, and of improving our counterintelligence capabilities. While our examination of these issues did not lead to separate written case studies, we use evidence gathered from these and other areas of our review of the Intelligence Community in explaining the recommendations we make in Part Two of this report.