

Notes for a Presentation by Paul Heinbecker*

**to the Canadian Association
of Security and Intelligence Studies**

Confessions of an Intelligence Sceptic

Ottawa,

October 26, 2006

**Paul Heinbecker is Director of the Centre for Global Relations at Wilfrid Laurier University and Distinguished Research Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation. He recently retired after 38 years with Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, most recently serving as Ambassador to the United Nations (2000-2003). This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of the institutions mentioned.*

**Check Against
Delivery**

I. Introduction

- **Trepidation**
 - **I feel like a Macdonald's customer who has wandered into a convention of three-star chefs**
 - **I can only speak to you as a consumer, albeit as a pretty experienced one**
 - **38 years of advice and advocacy, with chequered relations with the intelligence community (some of my best friends)**

- **My single (not very original) point today is that**
 - **Intelligence, in the sense of closed source information, is or should be just one in-put into decision-making**

- **decision-makers need to retain a healthy degree of skepticism about the value of “intelligence”**
 - **“intelligence” can be very seductive to the inexperienced leader , and very dangerous**
-
- **But good decisions are more likely to be made when all sources are factored into the equation—media accounts, diplomatic reporting, civil society experience, academic expertise**

II. Why I am a Skeptic

- *The Iraq Experience*
 - **An inexperienced leader--too susceptible to accepting what the intelligence community said (“It’s a slam-dunk”)**

- **Too much politicization—**
 - **cherry-picking--intelligence as “mockumentary”**
 - **fixing the intelligence to the policy**
 - **also Team B and Soviet capabilities**

- **Hubris**
 - **Contempt for the views of others—e.g., the UN**
 - **UN inspectors reports—there for all to see**
 - **Blix--Exclamation marks where there should have been question marks**

- **The importance of independence for Canada**
 - **The PCO assessment was much more sceptical**

- ***Bad Intelligence, Manipulation, Supply Problems and our “Allies”***

- **Bosnia-bad intelligence with a political purpose**
 - **Discouraging the Canadians**

- **The Zaire crisis- comically bad intelligence with a political purpose**
 - **Refugees everywhere but not a body to be seen—like looking for the Atlantic Ocean in the Sahara Desert**
- **the Iraq War—the credibly shrinking supply of intel**
- *Priorities, Distortions and Intelligence Cooperation*
 - **The War on Terror—drinking the Cool-Aid**
 - **Cooperation comes at a cost— governments decide whether the price is right**
 - **The issue of quids for quo's ?**
 - **Maher Arar?**

III. Does Canada Need its Own “CIA”, i.e., Canadian Intelligence Agency?

- **The sixties and British diplomatic reporting—maturity**
- **Cost-Benefit**