

17 March 1998

TO: Staff Director, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
FR: Mr. Kent D. Lee, President, East View Cartographic
RE: Request to testify concerning Commercial Mapping Technologies and related issues

Dear Sir:

I would like the opportunity to testify concerning U.S. Government attention and exploitation (specifically on the part of NIMA and CIA) to **commercially available mapping sources**.

I am president and co-founder of a company specifically dedicated to bringing open source publications from Russia and the countries of the former USSR. Indeed my company is the largest supplier to the U.S. intelligence community of commercial open source information from Russia, information which ranges from newspaper databases to gray literature to maps. We have provided such services for the past none years. Such business exceeds in volume \$1 million annually.

During the last two years we have witnessed, and in many cases initiated ourselves, enormous breakthroughs in access to Russian cartographic materials and methods. These breakthroughs may be summarized in two general ways:

1. Access to massive repositories of high-quality formerly classified topographic maps produced by the Russians in the last 10-15 years. Specifically:
 - 1:50,000 scale mapping (combat charts) of many regions of Asia, including Iran and China;
 - Very large scale (1:10,000) mapping for virtually every major city in the world (over 1800);
 - Digital cartographic databases (geographic names, infrastructure elements) of all kinds;
 - Access to the Russians' own collection of high-quality national topographic maps of countries traditionally denied to U.S. officials (e.g., Libyan maps of Libya, Iranian maps of Iran).
2. Cooperation with Russian military and military-related mapping officials for the production, in digital form, of large scale topographic maps to the specifications of the U.S. military.

In the former case, NIMA and CIA officials have made modest but clearly inadequate progress in acquiring such maps. This is not so simply for budgetary reasons. In some quarters there is a longstanding resistance to acquiring commercially available maps and working with map vendors, especially cutting-edge vendors such as ourselves. Obsolete procurement methods (exchanges, staff trips) are the norm. Almost no procurement

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officials understand Russian or Russia, and are therefore even less likely to be appreciative of the windfall benefits of Russian military mapping.

In the latter case, truly great cost savings may be realized on the part of the U.S. taxpayer. Whereas the production of a single 1:50,000 scale map by NIMA costs more than \$50,000, an identical--if not superior--map may be produced by a commercial vendor working with the Russian military for less than \$15,000. Since NIMA currently lacks thousands of such 1:50,000 scale maps--which function as tactical combat charts for American soldiers and analysts--the cost savings of a major cooperative effort with the Russians would be in the area of tens of millions of dollars.

It is worth noting, in the aftermath of the aviation disaster in northern Italy involving a U.S. Marines aircraft that whereas the location of the cable car was not indicated on NIMA charts--and therefore arguably not expected to be encountered by the pilots--the very cable car line involved in the disaster (and dozens of others in the area) was clearly marked on the equivalent Russian map.

It is time for the U.S. military and intelligence authorities to recognize the value of open source cartographic materials--especially Russian sources. Present U.S. policy is lacking, both in terms of acquiring such maps for reference and analysis, and in developing new money-saving cooperative production programs. The end of the cold war makes such cooperation possible. Prudent allocation of scarce U.S. taxpayers' resources makes this necessary.

Finally, it bears mentioning that corporate America (and indeed corporate Europe) has already recognized the value of Russian topographic maps. The worldwide standards for engineers in the highly competitive telecommunications industry are now being met by Russian military maps. Indeed our mapping business is led by corporate customers. U.S. Government, led by ignorance and intransigence at NIMA and CIA, is rapidly falling behind the real world.

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