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AN EVALUATION OF REMOTE VIEWING: RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

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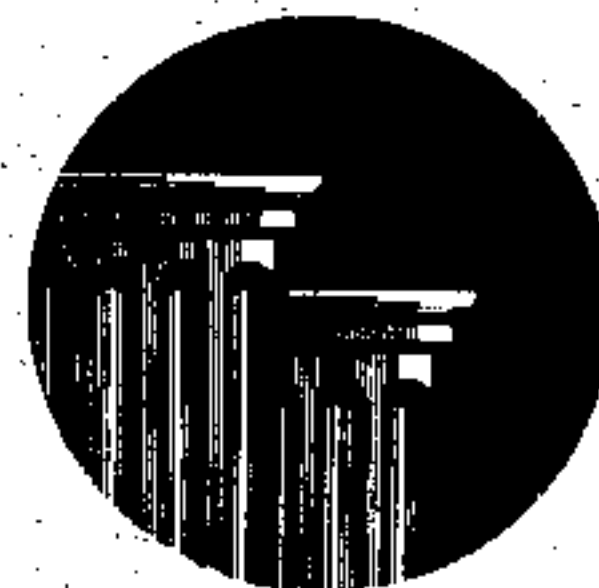
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PREPARED BY
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

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Executive Summary

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Studies of paranormal phenomena have nearly always been associated with controversy. Despite the controversy concerning their nature and existence, many individuals and organizations continue to be avidly interested in these phenomena. The intelligence community is no exception: beginning in the 1970s, it has conducted a program intended to investigate the application of one paranormal phenomenon — *remote viewing*, or the ability to describe locations one has not visited.

Conceptually, remote viewing would seem to have tremendous potential utility for the intelligence community. Accordingly, a three-component program involving basic research, operations, and foreign assessment has been in place for some time. Prior to transferring this program to a new sponsoring organization within the intelligence community, a thorough program review was initiated.

The part of the program review conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), a nonprofit, private research organization, consisted of two main components. The first component was a review of the research program. The second component was a review of the operational application of the remote viewing phenomenon in intelligence gathering. Evaluation of the foreign assessment component of the program was not within the scope of the present effort.

Research Evaluation

To evaluate the research program, a "blue-ribbon" panel was assembled. The panel included two noted experts in the area of parapsychology: *Dr. Jessica Utts*, a Professor of Statistics at the University of California/Davis, and *Dr. Raymond Hyman*, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon. In addition to their extensive credentials, they were selected to represent both sides of the paranormal controversy: Dr. Utts has published articles that view paranormal interpretations positively, while Dr. Hyman was selected to represent a more skeptical position. Both, however, are viewed as fair and open-minded scientists. In

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addition to these experts, this panel included two Senior Scientists from AIR; both have recognized methodological expertise, and both had no prior background in parapsychological research. They were included in the review panel to provide an unbiased methodological perspective. In addition, *Dr. Lincoln Moses*, an Emeritus Professor at Stanford University, provided statistical advice, while *Dr. David A. Goslin*, President of AIR, served as coordinator of the research effort.

Panel members were asked to review all laboratory experiments and meta-analytic reviews conducted as part of the research program; this consisted of approximately 80 separate publications, many of which are summary reports of multiple experiments. In the course of this review, special attention was given to those studies that (a) provided the strongest evidence for the remote viewing phenomenon, and (b) represented new experiments controlling for methodological artifacts identified in earlier reviews. Separate written reviews were prepared by Dr. Utts and Dr. Hyman. They exchanged reviews with other panel members who then tried to reach a consensus.

In the typical remote viewing experiment in the laboratory, a remote viewer is asked to visualize a place, location, or object being viewed by a "beacon" or sender. A judge then examines the viewer's report and determines if this report matches the target or, alternatively, a set of decoys. In most recent laboratory experiments reviewed for the present evaluation, *National Geographic* photographs provided the target pool. If the viewer's reports match the target, as opposed to the decoys, a hit is said to have occurred. Alternatively, accuracy of a set of remote viewing reports is assessed by rank-ordering the similarity of each remote viewing report to each photograph in the target set (usually five photographs). A better-than-chance score is presumed to represent the occurrence of the paranormal phenomenon of remote viewing, since the remote viewers had not seen the photographs they had described (or did not know which photographs had been randomly selected for a particular remote viewing trial).

In evaluating the various laboratory studies conducted to date, the reviewers reached the following conclusions:

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- A statistically significant laboratory effort has been demonstrated in the sense that hits occur more often than chance.
- It is unclear whether the observed effects can unambiguously be attributed to the paranormal ability of the remote viewers as opposed to characteristics of the judges or of the target or some other characteristic of the methods used. Use of the same remote viewers, the same judge, and the same target photographs makes it impossible to identify their independent effects.
- Evidence has not been provided that clearly demonstrates that the *causes* of hits are due to the operation of paranormal phenomena; the laboratory experiments have not identified the origins or nature of the remote viewing phenomenon, if, indeed, it exists at all.

Operational Evaluation

The second component of the program involved the use of remote viewing in gathering intelligence information. Here, representatives of various intelligence groups — "end users" of intelligence information — presented targets to remote viewers, who were asked to describe the target. Typically, the remote viewers described the results of their experiences in written reports, which were forwarded to the end users for evaluation and, if warranted, action.

To assess the operational value of remote viewing in intelligence gathering, a multifaceted evaluation strategy was employed. First, the relevant research literature was reviewed to identify whether the conditions applying during intelligence gathering would reasonably permit application of the remote viewing paradigm. Second, members of three groups involved in the program were interviewed: (1) end users of the information; (2) the remote viewers providing the reports, and (3) the program manager. Third, feedback information obtained from end user judgments of the accuracy and value of the remote viewing reports was assessed.

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This multifaceted evaluation effort led to the following conclusions:

- The conditions under which the remote viewing phenomenon is observed in laboratory settings do not apply in intelligence gathering situations. For example, viewers cannot be provided with feedback and targets may not display the characteristics needed to produce hits.
- The end users indicated that, although some accuracy was observed with regard to broad background characteristics, the remote viewing reports failed to produce the concrete, specific information valued in intelligence gathering.
- The information provided was inconsistent, inaccurate with regard to specifics, and required substantial subjective interpretation.
- In no case had the information provided ever been used to guide intelligence operations. Thus, remote viewing failed to produce actionable intelligence.

Conclusions

The foregoing observations provide a compelling argument against continuation of the program within the intelligence community. Even though a statistically significant effect has been observed in the laboratory, it remains unclear whether the existence of a paranormal phenomenon, remote viewing, has been demonstrated. The laboratory studies do not provide evidence regarding the origins or nature of the phenomenon, assuming it exists, nor do they address the important methodological issue of inter-judge reliability.

Further, even if it could be demonstrated unequivocally that a paranormal phenomenon occurs under the conditions present in the laboratory paradigm, these conditions have limited applicability and utility for intelligence gathering operations. For example, the nature of the remote viewing targets are vastly dissimilar, as are the specific tasks required of the remote viewers. Most importantly, the information provided by remote viewing is vague and ambiguous, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the technique to yield information of

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sufficient quality and accuracy for actionable intelligence. Thus, we conclude that continued use of remote viewing in intelligence gathering operations is not warranted.