

# Bush names Negroponte as national intelligence director

## A veteran of US subversion and dirty wars

**Bill Van Auken**  
**18 February 2005**

President Bush's nomination Thursday of John Negroponte as US director of national intelligence serves as another warning that his second term will be marked by an escalation of military aggression abroad and attacks on democratic rights at home.

The new post is supposed to centralize and coordinate the work of 15 separate civilian and military intelligence agencies in the "war on terrorism." Its creation marks the most sweeping change in the laws governing national intelligence since the onset of the Cold War more than half a century ago.

Negroponte's qualifications for this position include his involvement in the covert operations of the CIA when, as US ambassador to Honduras, he was a central organizer of the "contra" war that claimed tens of thousands of lives in neighboring Nicaragua. He was implicated as well in the operations of death squads in Honduras itself. More recently, as US ambassador to the United Nations, he pushed for the passage of Security Council resolutions based on false intelligence that paved the way for the US invasion of Iraq.

In June 2004, Negroponte took over the American embassy in Baghdad, as the US wound up its Coalition Provisional Authority and installed a puppet Iraqi regime under an interim prime minister, the long-time CIA asset Iyad Allawi. While remaining largely behind the scenes, Negroponte played the role of colonial proconsul, overseeing the occupation of Iraq during a period that saw a steady escalation of US violence, including the destruction of Fallujah.

Bush made the announcement at a White House briefing that lasted more than half an hour. After praising Negroponte for his "unique set of skills," he declared, "If we're going to stop the terrorists before they strike, we must ensure that our intelligence agencies work as a single, unified enterprise."

The White House press corps responded to the announcement with its habitual subservience, ignoring Negroponte's past and passing over the significance of the reconfiguration of the vast US intelligence apparatus as a "unified enterprise."

Most coverage has been limited to questioning whether the creation of a new "intelligence czar" can overcome the bureaucratic turf interests of the multiple agencies involved

and, in particular, whether it will have any effect on the massive intelligence operations of the US military. There has been speculation that the new office could face much the same fate as the Department of Homeland Security, which exerts little real control over the various agencies that it formally incorporated.

According to the official story in Washington, the creation of the national intelligence director (NID) post is part of a shakeup within US intelligence in a response to the events of September 11, 2001, and is aimed at preventing future terrorist attacks.

Establishing the new post was one of the central recommendations of the bipartisan commission formed by the administration to investigate the September 11 attacks. The commission's findings were based on the premise that 9/11 attacks were the result of a "failure of intelligence," and, in particular, a lack of coordination between the CIA and the FBI.

However, information that emerged in the course of the panel's investigation and subsequently has exposed the falsity of the administration's claims that it had no warning of threatened terrorist attacks within the US and that no one had contemplated the possibility that hijacked planes would be used as missiles. What the commission failed to probe was why these warnings were ignored and why the country's security forces were effectively demobilized on the day of the attacks. It never even considered the most salient question arising from September 11: did elements within the administration or the intelligence apparatus allow the attacks to happen in order to create the pretext for already planned wars of conquest in the oil-rich regions of Central Asia and the Persian Gulf?

The supposed remedy to September 11 amounts to giving more power to conspiratorial agencies whose own role in the events of that day is far from clear.

The new NID post will supposedly have budget-setting power over the various civilian and military agencies, and will oversee a National Counterterrorism Center, which will be empowered not only to collect intelligence, but also to order covert operations.

The fundamental change embodied in this unification of intelligence agencies is the abrogation of the legal prohibition

against the CIA and military intelligence engaging in domestic spying and covert operations. This ban was put in place as part of the National Security Act of 1947, amid warnings by both Democrats and Republicans that the newly formed CIA could turn into an “American Gestapo.”

Now, under Negroonte, the framework is being erected for precisely such an all-encompassing secret police apparatus, with extraordinary powers and resources to spy on and suppress anyone seen as a threat to the American ruling elite and its government.

Ironically, while Negroonte is ostensibly tasked with unifying the disparate intelligence agencies, he has been accused of launching his own rogue intelligence operation in Iraq. The US think tank Stratfor, which has close links to US military and intelligence circles, reported that Negroonte ran his own “parallel intelligence service” in Iraq, because he did not trust the CIA’s Baghdad station chief.

There has been a proliferation of such informal intelligence services, Stratfor noted, most famously the Pentagon’s “counter-terrorism evaluation group,” created to substantiate the bogus claims of ties between the Iraqi regime and Al Qaeda.

The spread of such off-the-books operations, Stratfor noted, “sets up the new national intelligence director (NID)—yet to be appointed—for failure. As long as government agencies and on-the-side intel projects undermine each other, the NID will not be able to bring all intelligence efforts under one umbrella. The proliferation of small, separate intelligence groups also hurts collection efforts by impeding the government’s ability to paint a clear picture of the realities on the ground—in Iraq and elsewhere.”

Negroonte’s objective was just that—to counteract the assessment of the CIA, whose station chief filed an end-of-the-year report giving a bleak assessment of the US occupation and warning that resistance could spiral out of control. Negroonte answered the assessment with a lengthy dissenting report of his own, painting a far rosier picture of what is widely seen as a debacle, not only in the CIA, but within the State Department and military as well.

As national intelligence director, Negroonte will doubtless continue along these lines, pressing the CIA and other intelligence agencies to tailor their assessments to meet the political needs of the administration. In this regard, he will be aligned with the new director of the CIA, Porter Goss, who issued a memo to the intelligence agency’s employees last November warning them not to “identify with, support or champion opposition to the administration or its policies.”

Before Iraq, Negroonte’s formative experience in matters of intelligence was his stint as US ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985. He was sent to take over the embassy in Tegucigalpa after his predecessor failed to heed warnings to keep quiet about the growing wave of assassinations, disappearances, jailings and torture carried out by the military-

dominated regime.

Negroonte not only halted any reporting of human rights violations, he oversaw their escalation during his four years in the country. He secured a 20-fold increase in US aid to the Honduran military—from \$4 million a year to nearly \$80 million. He also presided over a vast expansion of CIA activities in the country, with the local station becoming the agency’s largest anywhere in the world.

The CIA’s operations included the organization, training and equipping of a military unit known as Battalion 3-16, which carried out the abduction, illegal detention, torture and murder of thousands of Hondurans, including journalists, union activists, student leaders and others perceived to be opponents of the military and of US policy in the region. Those who survived reported being brutally beaten, shocked with electrodes, subjected to sexual abuse and kept naked in cells with little or no food or water. Many also testified that they were interrogated by US personnel during their captivity.

Throughout this period, Negroonte issued regular reports praising Honduras as a model democracy, while he actively suppressed attempts by embassy staff to issue written memos on human rights abuses.

Honduras was crucial to US policy in the region, functioning as a military base for Washington’s covert war against Nicaragua—a war that would claim some 50,000 lives, mostly as a result of terrorist attacks by the CIA-organized “contra” army. Negroonte served as a key link between the contras and the illegal network formed by the Reagan administration under Lt. Col. Oliver North to provide covert funding after Congress had voted to end US aid to the mercenary force.

The Nicaraguan government went to the World Court to demand an end to the US sponsored aggression. The ruling from The Hague found Washington guilty of “unlawful use of force”—a legal term for state terrorism. Much of this terrorism was launched from bases in Honduras that were constructed and maintained under the supervision of Negroonte. Washington responded by rejecting the court’s authority.

Whatever ultimate authority is invested in the post of national intelligence director, the elevation of Negroonte to titular chief of all US civilian and military intelligence agencies is an unmistakable signal that Washington intends to escalate a criminal policy that has already produced unprovoked wars, assassinations and the widespread use of torture. The integration of the CIA, FBI, military intelligence and other agencies under his leadership increases the danger that these same criminal methods will be turned against those who oppose this policy within the United States itself.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**