The Pre-Mortem Assessment Workshop: Theory and Practice

In an ever-complex world, even the experts are sometimes wrong. In many cases, a post-mortem assessment ensues, and with the help of hindsight, the anatomy of the failure is dissected in a painful and frustrating—if not helpful—process. The Pre-Mortem Assessment was developed as a result of an established need to avoid such failures and the subsequent post-mortem process. For this reason, the Pre-Mortem Assessment systematically reviews how a key analytic judgment, decision, or plan of action could go spectacularly wrong. The primary goal of the Pre-Mortem Assessment is to reduce the risk of surprise and the subsequent need for a post-mortem investigation altogether. It is much easier to influence people's decisions before, rather than after, they have made up their mind and have a personal investment in that decision and it is best used just prior to finalizing an analytic judgment or decision. This workshop will examine both the theory and practice of the Pre-Mortem Assessment by reviewing the technique, discussing how it can be applied to the case of Iraq Aluminum Tubes, and inviting attendees to participate in an exercise designed to practice its use. Attendees should gain both a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the technique and two practical examples of how to use it.

Facilitators

Randolph H. Pherson, President of Pherson Associates, teaches critical thinking skills and advanced analytic tools and techniques to analysts in the government and the private sector. He collaborated with Richards J. Heuer, Jr. in launching the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH) software tool and Congressional Quarterly Press has just published their new book "Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis." He has developed two other analytic techniques, The Pre-mortem Assessment and Quadrant Crunching, as well as three other software tools—the Hypotheses Generator, the Indicators Validator, and Team@ch, a collaborative web 2.0 version of ACH. Mr. Pherson completed a 28-year career with the Intelligence Community in 2000, last serving as National Intelligence Officer for Latin America. He received his A.B. from Dartmouth College and M.A. from Yale University.

Katherine Hibbs Pherson, Chief Executive Officer of Pherson Associates, teaches and advises on the use of structured analytic techniques to analysts in the US Government's Intelligence and Homeland Security Communities. Ms. Pherson and her company work

directly with US Government agencies and in partnership with a number of companies on strategic planning, security, and analysis projects. Ms. Pherson completed a 27-year career in intelligence and security analysis and resource management in 2000. Her leadership in the security arena led to the adoption of a risk management methodology, the strengthening and the implementation of overseas security countermeasures, and improvements in dealing with unsolicited contacts. Ms. Pherson received her A.B. in Hispanic Studies from Vassar College, an M.A. in Spanish Linguistics and Latin American Studies from the University of Illinois, and an M.A. in Communications from the University of Oklahoma.

Georgia Holmer has extensive experience working the criminal and intelligence nexus of international counterterrorism and foreign counterintelligence investigations and operations. She served for ten years at the FBI as an Intelligence Analyst working in close collaboration with analysts and officers from the US Intelligence Community and in liaison with foreign law enforcement and security services. Ms. Holmer entered the FBI as a Balkan expert and was a lead analyst on the 1999 inter-agency Kosovo Task Force.   From 2000-2004, she was the senior analyst on an inter-agency task force at the US Embassy in Athens, Greece where she received numerous awards for her work on Greek terrorism.   From 2004-2006, she worked at the FBI's Office of the Legal Attaché in Copenhagen examining terrorist trends in Scandinavia. She holds a B.A. from the American University's School of International Service and an M.A. in International Relations from Boston University.