

CAREER TRACKS - INTELLIGENCE

A PLATTE VALLEY SPECIAL VOLUME I

“Every breath you take and every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take, I'll be watching you.” These words are famously sung by the band “*The Police*” in their hit song “*Every Breath You Take*.” Aside from being purely lyrics, this phrase proves a valuable point - there **are** people watching your every move. Welcome to the world of intelligence.

The field of Intelligence is very unique, but nonetheless extremely vital for the United States to counter potential threats, terrorism, and even to keep domestic vulnerabilities from being taken advantage of. Put in the words of the Intelligence Community, the mission is “to collect, analyze, and deliver foreign intelligence and counterintelligence information to America’s leaders so they can make sound decisions to protect our country.” Now if that isn’t the ultimate career of service, I don’t know what is.

The Intelligence field in the United States can be traced to many different United States Government Organizations, all of them a part of an alliance-sort of group called the Intelligence Community. There are seventeen organizations that fulfill the mission of the Intelligence Community:

- Air Force Intelligence
- Army Intelligence and Security Command
- Central Intelligence Agency
- Defense Intelligence Agency
- Department of Energy Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence
- Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis
- Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research
- Drug Enforcement Administration Intelligence Program
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Marine Corps Intelligence
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
- National Reconnaissance Office
- National Security Agency
- Office of Naval Intelligence
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence
- U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence



Diagram of the Intelligence Community.

All seventeen organizations above are a part of the Intelligence Community, meaning they report directly to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). The National Director of Intelligence reports directly to the President, National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council.

To save time and to give readers the best possible surface knowledge on the field, this article will go into depth of just a few organizations, but will disclose exclusive interviews and information from certain departments. If you are interested in researching more than what was covered here, view the *sources* section at the conclusion of this article. Overall, each organization has different career paths to offer when it comes to intelligence.

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Office of the Director of National Intelligence

It comes as no surprise that the intelligence field has a top dog - someone who is in charge of the distributing, handling, and reporting of intelligence to the largest customer of the intelligence market, the US Government. According to the website of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "The Director of National Intelligence serves as the head of the Intelligence Community, overseeing and directing the implementation of the National Intelligence Program budget and serving as the principal advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council for intelligence matters related to national security." Mr. John Ratcliffe's job is extensive in reporting the findings of the intelligence community. Mr. Ratcliffe received his bachelor's degree with the leprechauns of Notre Dame University, as well as earning his law degree with Southern Methodist University.



Director of National Intelligence, Mr. John Ratcliffe

If you're interested in providing support to this branch of intelligence, you can find careers such as accounting, psychology, and even an intelligence analyst.

Central Intelligence Agency

Along with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency has been inserted into many shows such as "Jack Ryan" and "Person of Interest," but in reality, the shows make it out much different than it actually is. The Central Intelligence Agency's mission is to "preempt threats and further US national security objectives by collecting intelligence that matters, producing objective all-source analysis, conducting effective covert action as directed by the President, and safeguarding the secrets that keep our nation safe." Notice how the mission does not state anything about enforcement - which is the primary difference between the FBI and the CIA - the FBI usually works domestically and enforces federal statutes, while the CIA typically works internationally to just gather intelligence. Nonetheless, the career field is very broad and varied.

The positions available at the CIA come in all shapes and sizes - you could be analyzing intelligence back at the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia - you could be working overseas, collecting evidence or intelligence as a spy or "collector" - you could very well be working with clandestine (secret) sources to get information. All in all, you would be working to better secure the US from attacks, as well as possibly advising consumers (US Government) on what is happening worldwide.

Looking for a good CIA book? "The Unexpected Spy" by Tracy Walder is an excellent read that takes you into the perspective of a past CIA agent.

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Federal Bureau of Investigation

If providing intelligence to a federal law enforcement agency that primarily focuses on terrorism sounds the best to you, this is the agency. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is located in the J. Edgar Hoover building in Washington, D.C. The ultimate mission of this agency is to “protect the American people and uphold the constitution of the United States.”

Again, the main difference between the FBI and its counterpart, the CIA, is that the FBI focuses on domestic threats and terrorism, while the CIA mainly focuses on intelligence abroad.

Whenever a crime scene is opened in public - such as a shooting, bombing, or other scene that was caused by a crime - and terrorism is ruled as a possible cause, the FBI steps in and takes control immediately. The FBI in this instance acts as both a law enforcement and coordination agency.



J. Edgar Hoover Building,
FBI Headquarter Building, Washington
D.C.

On the other end, there are 56 field offices that the FBI has in major cities across the country that perform work on the ground in those cities and regions. For example, an agent at the Kansas City field office might be contesting in court for one day, while the next day, gathering evidence for a search warrant. The days can be varied as an agent, and there are many opportunities for different types of jobs.

According to the FBI website (fbi.gov), agents who are employed by the FBI should remain mobile and should expect to move, based on the needs of the employing agency. So, if you are looking for a nine-to-five, non-mobile job, this would not be the career path for you (unless you speak to an FBI employee who says otherwise, of course.)

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Some people fancy themselves as geography whizzes - this agency and the careers within it might be for you. The mission of this Springfield, VA based agency is to “provide geographical intelligence (GEOINT) for our nation’s security.” You can expect to be working with the various states of earth, including land, sea, and air, as well as science and geography. For more on this agency, Col Dave Winters, CAP, agreed to an interview over his time in the agency.

Col Dave Winters, CAP, worked at (and is now retired from) the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. He served as an Aeronautical Intelligence Analyst for seven and a half years. Prior to his service in this agency, Col Winters was a civilian pilot and a United States Air Force Air Traffic Control Officer.

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“I gathered aeronautical intelligence, analyzed it for accuracy and currency, and entered that information into databases” Col Winters explains. This was among his favorite part of his past job, “researching aeronautical problems and providing my customers with answers to their aeronautical questions/issues. It felt good to be of help.” If searching for intelligence applications, you will find that many of them note that you must have the ability to help the team and not always take credit for it - so the ability to feel good about helping the team must be intrinsic. On the topic of challenges, the Colonel mentioned that his biggest challenge in the field was “getting hired, it was an extensive process. Additionally, government bureaucracy is highly frustrating.”

Further in the interview, we asked Col Winters for advice about the career. When asked if others should pursue the field, he believed that “yes cadets should, but go into it with your eyes WIDE open. Intelligence analysis is by no means exciting. You have to enjoy academic research to be successful and satisfied.” And lastly, Col Winters provided some words of advice when finishing off the questions - “Get a background in aviation. Get an aviation related degree. Become a pilot/air traffic controller/airport manager first and develop a solid foundation of aviation/aeronautical knowledge.” Luckily, the Civil Air Patrol provides amazing opportunities for cadets interested in aviation.

Col Winters is now serving as the North Central Region Deputy Chief of Staff for Cadet Programs, working with cadets across the region to excel in the cadet program.

US Military Intelligence Branches

The military doesn't only focus on the offense - the defense is just as important, as every athlete should recall unhesitatingly. All branches of our United States Armed Forces have an “Intelligence Officer” position, as each branch has an intelligence organization in the Intelligence Community (see *Diagram of Intelligence Community* above). According to [Today's Military](#), a website created by the Department of Defense for young adults, parents, and others curious about the military, “These officers develop and execute plans, policies, and procedures that facilitate intelligence functions. They are experts on all intelligence disciplines and their application across the spectrum of military operations.” (Today's Military 1). The same website also states the vast requirements and expectations for the job: becoming commissioned as an officer in a branch of the United States Armed Forces, and then conducting hands-on field and on-the-job training for a varied amount of time. Due to the high clearance of intelligence that you may be handling, you will need to ensure that you are able to obtain a Top Secret clearance (see *A Note on Security Clearances* below). Overall, if you are looking for a job that keeps you on your feet, interacting with new information everyday, and all while serving your country and fellow citizens as an officer in the world's greatest military, look no further.

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A Note on Security Clearances

Security Clearances do not only identify those that are trusted by the Department of State to withhold and access secrets of our nation, but also those that can be dependable, have had a clean record, and are expected to hold the highest of integrity and excellence while on the job. One big takeaway for teenagers looking to enter the field - doing activities such as drugs, vaping, drinking, inappropriate social media posts, or anything that would impress upon your potential employer that you have less than reasonable “character, reliability, stability, or among others, trustworthiness” can raise questions with your employer. Make the right choices, make the safe choices, and make the smart choices. Civil Air Patrol provides cadets with opportunities to learn about how to make safe decisions through initiatives such as the Red Ribbon Leadership Academy, National Character & Leadership Symposium, and even Cadet Officer School.

For more information regarding security clearances, and the requirements/criteria for being eligible to obtain it, visit <https://www.state.gov/security-clearances>.

Conclusion

Overall, intelligence not only has domestic importance, but also serves a role internationally as well. The field of intelligence may be one of the most secretive fields available for civilians in the United States, but it proves to be one of the most active and vital fields backstage. There’s a range of opportunities for everyone across the field - it’s finding the one that you will enjoy waking up to do everyday that will serve you wonders.