Conclusions of Lincoln Lab review committee

(Editor's note: The following are the conclusions of the Interim Report of the Lincoln Laboratory Review Committee, dated Feb. 26, 1986.)

1. Lincoln Laboratory is a key US military laboratory. It specialises in the areas of communications, radar and remote sensing, electronic warfare, signal processing and physical electronics. It has an excellent technical staff and its record of contributions has made it a national resource.

2. From the information furnished to the committee, it appears that the Lincoln Lab program is in substantial compliance with the spirit of the guidelines for work on military problems, laid down by the Executive Committee in 1969.

3. The Executive Committee believes that MIT's public service commitment includes bringing its technical and scientific knowledge to the public, as well as providing it to the Department of Defense. Such public activities are normal to the campus; but they are strikingly absent at Lincoln.

4. Lincoln's overhead payments to the campus are substantial, and amounted to about $5.5 million in 1985.

5. For many years MIT has played an important role in determining Lincoln's technical problems. The laboratory essentially manages itself, since nearly all technical and programmatic decisions are made between Lincoln and its military sponsors.

6. When Lincoln was established, it appeared that no one asked whether MIT was undertaking a five-year job, a 30-year job, or a permanent one. It now seems that Lincoln has become a permanent part of MIT's research and development programs. But what it is effect a government laboratory. The committee recommends that the Institute seriously review the nature and direction of its future relationship with Lincoln Laboratory, taking into account the benefits to Lincoln, to MIT, to the public, and to the Department of Defense.

7. The committee believes that MIT's public service commitment includes bringing its technical and scientific knowledge to the public, as well as providing it to the Department of Defense. Such public activities are normal to the campus; but they are strikingly absent at Lincoln.

8. Lincoln Laboratory in the light of the 1969 Review Panel on the Special Laboratories for a more balanced research program and public service responsibilities. The committee recommends that the Institute seriously review the educational and academic relationship between Lincoln Laboratory and the campus, and it recommends that its charter be revised as proposed.

(Editors note: The proposed charter is as follows:)

The committee is appointed by the president to serve as an academic liaison between the faculty and administration and the Lincoln Laboratory. The committee shall review the nature and scope of the research and development programs of the Lincoln Laboratory in the light of the Executive Committee's guidelines and the mission of the Institute, including its academic, research and public service responsibilities. The committee should review the educational and academic relationship between Lincoln Laboratory and the campus, and recommend to the president in the form and direction of the Lincoln Laboratory programs and on continuing relations between the Laboratory and the campus.

It is expected that the committee will meet periodically with the deans and other members of the staff of the laboratory, discuss its findings with the president and the provost, and report to the MIT faculty from time to time.

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