

"SIG" and "IRG"

In the State Department these days, with procedures being developed for administration of this strengthening authority, one hears a good deal about "SIG" and "IRG". In more specific terms, these abbreviations refer to the "Senior Interdepartmental Group" and the "Interdepartmental Regional Group". The formation of these co-ordinating bodies along with the gradual establishment of new positions of "Country Director" represent the three main organizational changes.

The Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) takes the form of a permanent Interdepartmental Committee with the Under-Secretary of State as its "Executive Chairman". This latter term is used to describe a chairman who has the authority and responsibility to decide all matters coming before his Committee subject to the right of any member to appeal from his position to higher authority. This is an important provision which makes the difference between the normal committee and an incisive decision-making body. The other regular members of the Senior Interdepartmental Group are: the Deputy Secretary of Defence, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the U.S. Information Agency and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The Chairman will invite representatives of other departments and agencies when they have an interest in the matters under consideration.

At the next level of responsibility, the Regional Assistant Secretary of State will occupy important focal positions in the channel of responsibility for overall direction, co-ordination and supervision of interdepartmental matters in the regions of their responsibility. The Assistant Secretaries will serve as executive chairmen of Interdepartmental Regional Groups (IRG) analogous in membership and responsibility to the Senior Interdepartmental Group. They will work closely with U.S. ambassadors and the country teams abroad and will assure the adequacy in their regions of the U.S. policy, plans, programmes, resources and performance.

Country Director

A new position of Country Director is being established in the regional bureaus to serve as a single focus of responsibility for leadership and co-ordination of departmental and interdepartmental activities concerning the country or countries of assignment. The Country Director will also be responsible for seeing that the ambassador's needs are served both within the Department and Government-wide. He will ensure that the mission is fully supported in the full range of its requirements. The Country Director can raise specific matters for consideration by the IRG and can bring detailed knowledge to IRG discussions when so requested.