

# How Right How Often

## The Nature of the Question: A Baseball Analogy

One of the most persistent and unanswerable questions in intelligence analysis is this: How right should the analysts be how often? The answer depends, in part, on the available intelligence and the skills of the analyst. But there are also significant differences depending on the nature of the question being asked.

To use baseball as an analogy, there are only two activities happening in a ball game: fielding and hitting. But the standards for these two are very different. Professional baseball fielders are expected to perform in the range of .950, or better, out of a thousand. But across the major leagues, the batting average is around .260. So, clearly, batting is more difficult than fielding.

In terms of analysis, sometimes there are fielding questions. For example: Who is the commander of the North Korean air force, and what do we know about him? But sometimes there are batting questions: What is Kim Jung Un going to do next?

Therefore, analytic performance is also driven by the nature of the question being asked.