(S//SI) Information Needs Management: Careful Planning Aids SIGINT Response to Iraq War

FROM: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
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(S//SI) The months of advanced warning which we received prior to the onset of war in Iraq allowed the Customer Relationships Directorate (CRD) to help NSA to understand customers' Information Needs (INs) like never before. The benefits both to NSA and to customers are clear. Customers are confident that NSA knows what information they need and that it is working to provide that information. NSA, in turn, has had a reasonably stable list of validated, comprehensive, coherent INs against which to focus the efforts of its people and equipment.

(S//SI) Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, NSA has not experienced the flood of customer requests for information that was feared. This is an example of planning which succeeds in a time of crisis. For example, since March 17th, a few days before the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, we have received only 29 new or modified Information Needs in the National SIGINT Requirements Process (NSRP). The 24/7 watch desks, which were stood up for the Campaign, proved able to manage this volume. By contrast, during the first two weeks following the attacks of 11 September 2001, NSOC was flooded with nearly 300 requests for information; and by the end of 2001, this number had skyrocketed to nearly 1700.

(S//SI) How did this improvement come about? The success resulted from a lot of hard work and determination on the part of multiple elements of SID, the Extended Enterprise, and the Intelligence Community. Leadership from senior SID and CRD managers provided the key transformational initiative. Three initiatives came together to provide for a successful outcome:

- A group of representatives from all the intelligence disciplines (SIGINT, IMINT, HUMINT, MASINT, OSINT) worked for months last autumn to gather, synthesize, and most importantly, map Information Needs to government leadership and military commanders' key decision points.

- The NSRP system came on-line in mid-summer and was declared operational in early 2003, bringing with it the Customer Information Needs Desk on the NSOC floor.

- The CRD opened the Requirements Analysis Center (RAC) in late 2002 to manage and adjust the focus of the SIGINT System on the specific INs of the most interest to our customers at any given moment in time.

(S//SI) By the end of January, the integrated list of SIGINT Information Needs had been entered into NSRP. Since that time, an intensive effort has continued to keep this list up-to-date and to remain closely coupled with the customers' battle rhythm to ensure that we are focusing on the most important needs and are delivering the intelligence that counts in time to make a difference.

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Enormous strides have been taken, yet there is still work to be done so that NSA can continue to improve its level of understanding of customer Information Needs and respond fully to those needs.

(U//FOUO) We hope you continue to read the articles in this series and, again, urge you to contact ████████ Customer Gateway Chief of Staff, S11, ████████, ████████@nsa, with any comments or suggestions.

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