



**(U) Write Right -- SIGINT Myths: The Traffic Fairy**

FROM: [REDACTED]  
of the Reporting Board (S12A)  
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(U//FOUO) SID *today* [published a request](#) to the work force last autumn for "NSA Myths," which started a lively discussion of such tales as the official number of staples to be used in fastening a burn bag (a surprising number of myths seem to relate to our classified waste disposal system).

(U//FOUO) This brought to mind a specifically SIGINT Myth, that of the Traffic Fairy. In an agency whose personnel are rumored to be more than 70% introvert, it's perhaps to be expected that analysts would tend to keep their eyes focused on their desktops (physical or virtual), sometimes to the point of confusing availability of collected information with reportability.

(U//FOUO) Granted, in the bad old days too many of us had our noses held to an extremely large grindstone, which hid from view the actual customer requirements and hence an essential component of the SIGINT reporting cycle: feedback. But those days are long gone. Just because the traffic fairy dropped it on your desk (or your workstation) doesn't mean it's reportable. Sharpen your decision-making skills when selecting the meat for your report.

(U//FOUO) For example, we saw a recent report that concerns the efforts of an important target country to investigate the motive behind an explosion at a house of worship. The Summary describes the situation with admirable succinctness, but adds the irrelevant information that the country's president remarked that a recent snowfall might ease a water shortage. Even if this were truly significant (which a quick reading of the Details indicates it wasn't), it surely wasn't of equal importance with the main SIGINT fact and therefore shouldn't have been included in the summary.

For more reporting advice, see [The Reporting Forum](#).



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