

**Open Sources and Law Enforcement ~ Learning Curves and Pain Barriers.**

Last year officers from New Scotland Yard attended the Open Source conference in Washington DC along with some of you here today. After nearly a year of piloting Open Sources at low level we felt that we were ready to implement an operational system. Being fairly new to some of the concepts we were interested in seeing how others had established their units and developed OS within their intelligence communities.

We also wanted to understand the pain barriers and learning curves others had gone through and learn from their mistakes and experiences. Since returning from that conference Scotland Yard now has a fully functional Open Source unit which serves both tactical and strategic operations in our nations capital.

Some of the challenges we have faced in trying to establish this innovative form of intelligence support are integrally related to many of the other challenges which we face as a large publicly accountable organisation.

It's true that we do suffer from being such a large police department and we sometimes have to pay the 'Euro Penalty' in many of our procurement exercises which can add time and expense to an already complicated process.

Developing new and innovative solutions is not as easy as it sounds. I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the scenario.... First we have to build a *business case* that goes to a *project board* who will want a *user requirement* and a *bid for funding*. When that is finally agreed we have to *tender in the EU Journal*, examine all of the *responses and proposals*, *test and evaluate* any serious contenders and then *weigh the results* against what was in the *original user requirement*.

Another problem is that open sources don't come cheap. It is sometimes difficult to convince account holders of the cost effectiveness of obtaining a piece of information in 10 seconds for

£30 against paying an informant £200 or the cost of a surveillance team at £1000 per day to get the same information.

But in spite of this and with the resilience and tenacity of true detectives we stand at the beginning of a long and intriguing journey into the world of open sources.

Let me begin by telling you briefly how we came to be where we are at the moment and the learning curve that we went through to get here. Those of you in law enforcement might see some similarities and may even be able help us with advice in the networking sessions of this conference. Others of you may be interested to know how open sources differ in our area of interest and which areas are more important in law enforcement than say, for instance, commercial intelligence.

The use of open sources in law enforcement is far from a new concept and intelligence agencies have paid outsiders for their information for many years. Some may consider informants to be open sources, after all what is the difference between paying an academic for his or her opinion on the strategic position of illegal movements of nuclear materials or paying a super grass for information on top organised criminals. However, for the purposes of our *own* exercise we define open sources as something more specific. We consider an open source to be a root of information *outside* of the normal police arena, something that we can buy or acquire for free, which either adds value to existing intelligence or saves time and money in obtaining the information by traditional means.

Telephone intelligence is an example where most police forces have employed an established 'open source' as an origin of information and intelligence. Telephone companies provide us with data about individuals and their telephone accounts. This type of information accounts for a large amount of intelligence business requests in many law enforcement agencies.

In 1993 many police forces in the UK began to realise that there was much benefit to be had from exploiting commercially available data from credit reference companies. For many years the business world had known the value of credit referencing along with demographic and consumer intelligence which is available about all of us. About that time companies who held large deposits of this

data realised that the law enforcement market was an area ripe for the expansion of such business. Intelligence or information about people; where they lived, who their financial associates were, what their financial transactions were, what companies they were involved with and so on would be of significant interest in the fight against crime.

The range and sophistication of this data is something which many people would find staggering. It is now possible to build comprehensive demographic pictures of most consumers, and the data sets that go to make up that analysis are a gold mine for the investigator of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A good example of this is that most police stations in the UK still rely on a hard copy of the electoral roll in order to confirm the residence of suspects and targets. This means that searching is limited only to that local area and indexing capabilities are limited accordingly. Now, with many databases merged into each other and a computerised electoral roll with a 10-year history covering the entire country, it is a lot easier to trace subjects of investigations and to link them to associates, business partners, addresses and companies.

Our open source motto is 'Opening Closed Doors' and that is just what we feel we are doing. We are constantly surprised at how many investigations can be advanced simply by telling an investigator where his suspect or target lives. Time and again we receive fragments of names and addressees from informants which are converted into real intelligence through open source and returned with value added data of informants, business interests etc. Some of this may seem pretty basic but the simple fact is that until now law enforcement has not had the tools to deal with this effectively.

Until recently, open source checks for untraceable suspects and companies have accounted for 90% of the demands coming into the open source unit at Scotland Yard. Our strategy will be to make all of these 'low level' open source applications available to intelligence units at all echelons of our police service. This should also allow the Directorate of Intelligence to focus more resources and time on the use of open sources for strategic intelligence gathering.

Another area in which we intend to make progress is in the multi-agency approach. We have already established links within our own specialist units whereby we supply intelligence on matters from fraud to paedophilia and terrorism to drug trafficking. We have also begun to forge associations with several external agencies who have a vested interest in law enforcement at national level. We believe that by working with partners we can learn from each other's successes (and mistakes) and at the same time build a centre of excellence for open source in the UK. We are constantly amazed to find the specialist services that are available as open sources and the range and quality of information that they can provide. In many cases it may be that these services will be of limited use to us at Scotland Yard but we are always quick to tell others in the Open Source community who we think might benefit.

Other advantages, such as the sanitising of routes of enquiry and extending the communal availability of resources will make alliances with police, NCIS, defence and security services and maybe many more, a very effective user group. Companies such as Lexis Nexis already posit such closed user groups as the way forward for serious open source data analysis in the UK and most of Europe.

We do not have the funds for the 'big picture' open source model that many would patronise. We simply are not able to call upon vast financial resources to fund academic research into intelligence related projects. We do believe, however, that small effective cartels working in the Open Source arena can make a significant impact and compensate for other areas where we do not enjoy the same luxuries as the private sector or large US government departments. We are heartened by the significant interest that has been shown by our open source partners in working closely with the Metropolitan Police in this area.

This leads into an area where we see the future growth of open source within the Metropolitan Police and an opportunity to plug some of the other good work that has been led from the Directorate of Intelligence.

Like many other law enforcement departments around the world the Metropolitan Police has gone through significant change over the past 5 years. Tighter controls on budgets and more accountability have met with such things as Policing by Objectives and Intelligence Led Policing. In short we have to show that the money

which the public pay for their police service is well spent and that we are anxiously engaged in reducing crime, catching and convicting criminals and that we reflect the priorities of our tax payers in the work we undertake.

As far as Intelligence Led policing is concerned a certain amount of restructuring – both intellectually *and* organisationally was in order for us to make the changes necessary to achieve our corporate intelligence strategy. Having formed new Divisional and Area Intelligence Units and staffed them with motivated and committed intelligence staff we have recently turned our attention to changes at the centre of our organisation – New Scotland Yard.

This month sees the establishment of a new Strategic Intelligence Group within the Directorate of Intelligence which will give valuable long-sighted support to operational policing at the highest levels within the metropolis of London. Concentrating on five main areas at first – Drugs, Series Sex Crimes, Commercial Robbery, Firearms, and Murder we hope to deliver strategic intelligence packages to crime commanders and specialist units that will better equip them to target the problem areas – and criminals of the future before they can become established.

For example – a significant seizure of drugs and/or drug traffickers in Turkey yesterday could have important implications for the streets of London in 6 or 12 months time. It is well documented that these seizures do hit the criminal fraternity hard on occasions and the ‘knock-on’ effect should be more closely monitored and anticipated by the police and customs agencies.

The release of 5,000 AK47 rifles onto the black market could have significant ramifications for Drugs, Firearms and Murder operations in many countries and metropolitan cities around the world.

A missing consignment of Semtex reported in Venezuela might take some months to come to notice through normal police channels, whereas open source monitoring could identify it as a potential terrorist threat within hours of it’s disappearance.

Only recently in London a large seizure of hard core drugs by officers from our department resulted in an associated kidnap situation where lost *investments* by some of the ‘cartel’ were in issue between the kidnapers and the so-called victims. In these

cases police run the risk of exposing too many of their covert responses and capabilities to such 'victims'. An early analysis of this situation by the Directorate of Intelligence enabled us to mount a damage-limitation exercise that resulted in no loss of life and numerous arrests of quality villains. It is our hope that intellectual scanning and monitoring of open source intelligence will better equip us to analyse and anticipate such events.

There are many other areas that we could point to as indications of our open source successes. Many of these operations are ongoing and in order to quote one or two examples I may have to change some details to protect the 'guilty'.

Just recently we were sent a file from Interpol, through the usual channels at our NCIS, which related to the illegal smuggling of explosives. One particular man was known to be involved and all attempts were being made to link this man to the smuggling of materials into Middle Eastern countries. Our open source unit began researching the known suspect and quickly established that he was involved in a number of British and foreign companies. By analysing the lists of director's names from those companies and subjecting them to similar scrutiny we were able to find a co-director of a European export company, who was from the Middle East, with addresses both there and in Europe. The connection was made and the file returned to Interpol. Total turnaround time in the open source unit – 30 minutes.

Other more, 'bread and butter' cases include the many instances of murderers, rapists and other less desirable elements of our society who are identified through informants and technical resources.

In these cases the investigating officer is not usually given full names, dates of birth, addresses or criminal record numbers. The open source unit continues to identify many serious criminals where the investigating officer knows only a first or last name and a rough idea of where that person lives. Where we are unable to pinpoint the suspect exactly we are usually able to point an investigator at the most likely two or three culprits.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with cases where open sources have found information far cheaper than the cost of an officers time in pursuing 'analogue' lines of research. In some cases we have

returned intelligence which officers would never have got in a million years of their normal enquiries!

Data Protection Legislation has sometimes worked against some of what we have tried to achieve but I think that it would be politically wise of me to avoid too much comment in that area.

It is possible that the present lobbying from the larger service providers will bring long awaited changes to some of the data protection attitudes but that will not happen for some time. It is our contention that the investigative world, generally, has only just begun to scratch the surface of the sources available to it.

Imagine all of the data, whether protected in some way or not, that is held on computers about you. Details about your finances, credit, debts, banking, accommodation, income, employment, medical details, transport modes, education, military service, taxes, social security, land registry, immigration, travel, holidays, spending, shopping, professional information, associates, family and extended family, business and company information, demographic information... the list just goes on and on. Now imagine having access to all of that information about the top organised criminals in the world.

We are quite proud that in the short time that we have been running an open source bureau we have developed the capability to find out personal information on almost any adult criminal in the United Kingdom. We can access records about all limited and non-limited companies including accounts, director's details and company trading. We are able to access, on-line, the history of all commercial property transactions and details of the national land registry giving us information which is useful in both strategic and tactical operations.

We are also able to extend our research into many countries around the world and have links that provide us company and news information in English from less obvious places such as Russia, The Baltic States, South America, China and India amongst many others. We have also entered into a partnership with the Ministry of Defence Evaluation and Research Agency to help develop their Open Source technology 'DELOS'. This will enable the Open Source package, in use by the military, to have more relevance to law enforcement and also gives us, the cops, a pretty powerful tool

capable of delivering a variety of intelligence related services directly to our detectives and analysts. Other initiatives with companies such as Lexis® Nexis® are aimed at developing a strategically beneficial environment for the exploitation of open sources in law enforcement throughout Europe.

As I have said, we have only just begun to open some of the closed doors and we have a long road ahead of us which we will find interesting and challenging. Someone once said. *'When you can't do everything, just do something.'* Unfortunately the brave new world that people like Robert Steele foresee where open sources have the *panacea* for all our ills is just too unwieldy for most public sector users such as ourselves.

It will only be by proving our worth and delivering quality timely intelligence from sources that have been behind closed doors for too long that we can hope to establish the future of open sources in law enforcement circles. We need the tenacity to find the doors, the patience to open them and the foresight to use their contents wisely.

We would be happy to hear from any of you who think you might be able to help us with any tips, advice or sources. Any useful comments will be gratefully received.

Thank you.



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