

Open Source Intelligence: the *Lingua Franca* for regional intelligence co-ordination and information sharing.

Bloc A (Introduction)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Although, for obvious reasons, in general it is unusual for intelligence and security services to step into the limelight, in recent years we have seen one exception to that rule. A tradition has evolved to put the usual reluctance aside on certain occasions.

Those occasions are the international symposiums on Open Source Solutions, organised by Robert Steele, where the law enforcement and intelligence community is invited to deliver guest lectures.

The well-known conferences on open sources in Washington have now got equivalents in South-east Asia and in Europe.

After the first European conference which was held in Brussels last year, today it is The Hague that has the honour to host the conference.

Which is, I think, a good choice.

Not only do many international institutions whose duties are closely related to the theme of this conference have their seat in this city, but The Hague, being the city where the Dutch government is seated, is also the symbol of a country where respect for people's privacy is considered of paramount importance.

In this country the government shows great reserve and caution in relation to the deployment of special law enforcement and intelligence resources. In that connection the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are valued highly.

For that reason open source intelligence as a primary tool fits very well into that policy.

Of course there are also other good reasons to use open sources, but I think

it is important, first and foremost, to stress our basic motive for using open sources.

The symbolic value of this venue automatically leads me to the connection with the important principle which I just described.

Bloc B (Situation at the BVD)

Restricting myself to the BVD now, I would like to point out the following. As a result of the fact that we have always attached great importance to open source intelligence, this instrument was given a permanent place in the organisational structure and in primary production of our service on 1 January 1991, when a separate department for open source intelligence was set up.

The open source intelligence department is part of the Intelligence Support Directorate, which also includes departments for other special intelligence resources such as technical operations and surveillance.

It is evident that setting up this department underlines the great importance we attach to open source intelligence.

[Since 1991 open source intelligence at the BVD has developed in two directions.

On the one hand, efforts were made to ensure that the BVD could take advantage of the developments on the digital information market and use commercial databases and the opportunities of the Internet at an early stage.

On the other hand, much attention was given to making the acquired knowledge and ideas on open source intelligence organisation-wide available, instead of keeping it restricted to the open source department.

This has resulted in a situation in which large numbers of employees are not only gaining more and more insight into open source intelligence, but also have easy access to open sources at their own desks, through a distributed open sources network.

That implies, however, that the role of the open source intelligence department in acquiring information has been reduced, but for that reason it can now put more emphasis on exploration of the information market and on giving assistance to users. Open source intelligence is still a speciality that demands specific care and attention, also in the long term.]

Bloc C (First steps towards co-operation)

You will understand that when in an organisation like ours so much intensive attention is given to open source intelligence, a need is felt for external orientation with the aim to find new ways to improve the results.

A natural way to achieve this is to share information and experiences with colleagues from counterpart and/or comparable organisations at home and abroad.

I know that such contacts have already led to both structural and ad-hoc discussions and mutual assistance between open source intelligence experts from various services, both at a bilateral level and in groups.

One of the results of this co-operation is, for example, the contract that a number of Dutch law enforcement and intelligence organisations jointly concluded with a large content provider in order to get a discount.

It is a good initiative, but in the long term such small-scale initiatives will fail to offer adequate solutions to other important developments in the field of open source intelligence.

Bloc D (Two problems which validate the importance of open sources and co-operation)

In my opinion there are two aspects which make it necessary to follow a more top-down course in the further development of open source intelligence. However, there should be no doubt about it, that the initiatives that were taken on a lower level provide an excellent basis for such a course.

The two aspects I am referring to concern on the one hand ICT-related developments in connection with interception and legislation, and on the other hand the growing impact of frequently changing and complex threats and issues relevant to the intelligence and security community.

As far as the first aspect is concerned: it is not sure whether the development of interception techniques and methods will be able to keep pace with ICT developments. Even if that is the case, it still remains to be seen whether national legislation can respond to these changes in time.

But even in the best possible scenario the high capital expenditure involved will prompt us first to exhaust all other options, such as, in particular, open source intelligence.

The second aspect concerns the emergence of various threats. The diversity, fluctuations and the diffuse character of these threats place us in difficult dilemmas over the deployment of our scarce secret operational resources. For this reason we first have to exhaust all possibilities offered by open sources. But that policy requires specific attention for the selection of personnel and resources for such a working procedure.

Bloc E (Introduction to proposal)

All in all there is a lot to say for combining knowledge and expertise in the field of open source intelligence, both at a regional, national and international level.

[Such a co-operation is inspired by the idea that open source intelligence is one of the major intelligence tools and the awareness that the environment changes so rapidly that disregarding open source intelligence would be a policy mistake.]

For that reason I would like to emphasize that it is necessary to set up structural forms of co-operation between intelligence and security services, both at a strategic and at an operational level.

In that connection I am giving you two ideas to think about.

Bloc F (Two proposals)

1. In the first place, at a strategic level it would give our services an enormous impulse if open source intelligence becomes a permanent item on the agenda of various multilateral co-operation groups of intelligence and security services.

A common view on the role and the importance of open source intelligence would considerably improve co-operation, including information and expertise sharing at an operational level.

[I have the feeling that at the moment there is still too much reluctance and reserve at a working level, because along the top-down line co-operation and exchange of information and expertise on open source intelligence are still insufficiently encouraged or approved, which might lead to unnecessary self-imposed restrictions.]

In addition, official approval and institutionalization will also win over those who are still watching the developments from the sidelines and make it easier for them to take the step towards co-operation.

2. In the second place, I believe that it might be a good idea to set up an international clearing house for open source intelligence which operates at a working level. Such a clearing house might map out the acquisition possibilities for intelligence and security services at a global level, describe the accessibility of sources and evaluate the importance, usefulness and value of various types of sources. It might also give assistance to open source experts at intelligence and security services if necessary.

Such a clearing house would save much time and money when from place A sources in place B have to be discovered, disclosed and evaluated.

But there is more to it, because a clearing house can also function as a meeting point for experts to gain ideas and knowledge which will benefit their own work.

A clearing house can have a positive effect on the time frame for products. This is an important aspect in relation to quality improvement, a major issue to many services.

One of the great advantages of a clearing house is the fact that it is focused

on sources and not on the information itself. That guarantees the independence of the participating services.

I believe that, in line with the ideas of Mr Storbeck, in this way it is possible to give shape to relevant co-operation in the intelligence and security community.

Bloc G (Knowledge Management)

Looking at it in a wider perspective, regional or international co-operation in the field of open source intelligence is nothing but a form of knowledge management.

I would like to spend a few words on this phenomenon and its relation to open source intelligence.

It is evident that in several sectors of society, such as universities, trade and industry and, to a lesser degree, non-profit organisations, people have shown a growing interest in knowledge management in the last few years.

Of course the interest in knowledge management is not new, but as a result of the spectacular developments in the field of ICT, its importance has grown.

Knowledge-intensive organisations have become aware of the fact that the intellectual capital in their business is actually the cork on which they float and that cherishing this capital is one of the main duties of the management.

Intelligence and security services are typically knowledge-intensive organisations. You will understand that for that reason my service is closely following the developments in the field of knowledge management, where possible using the principles of knowledge management for improving primary working procedures.

Knowledge management implies that very much attention is focused on the environment in which an organisation operates. An intelligence or security service learns from that environment and, conversely, the environment learns from the products provided by the intelligence or security service.

Unfortunately, that interrelation between the environment (and the client) and intelligence and security services is not self-evident, because it is against the nature of our work.

However, if there is one natural interface between an intelligence or security service and its social environment, it is open source intelligence.

Open source intelligence may function as a gate to acquire knowledge and expertise without affecting the protection of certain operations.

Just imagine how analytical knowledge and skills may be enhanced through the gate of open source intelligence and possibly through a clearing house, or how your open source intelligence network might provide an insight in knowledge and experiences that you have so far never been aware of. I believe that, especially where the acquisition of 'metaknowledge' is concerned, open source intelligence offers great opportunities.

So open source intelligence is also a medium in the context of knowledge management.

Bloc H (Summary)

I am now about to summarize and wind up my argument.

This seminar is taking place in The Hague, somehow a symbolical place. At this seminar in the next few days participants will rightly advocate a better and more optimal use of open sources.

It is not only on ethical grounds that so much emphasis is put on open source intelligence. It is also the rapidly changing world that prompts us to take further steps to make the most of our opportunities in this field.

At the moment there is already good national and international co-operation both at a bilateral and at a multilateral level, but a specific top-down impulse might enhance the results in terms of structure, time frame and content.

At an operational level a clearing house offers good opportunities, because it can improve the quality of our products, while it does not affect the

independence of a service.

A clearing house for open source intelligence also enables services to focus on knowledge management and to use it as a means to spread useful knowledge and expertise, while the protection of operations is still guaranteed.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you a pleasant and effective conference.

OSS '99 PROCEEDINGS Global Information Forum Information Superiority through the
Collection, Sharing and Analysis of Relevant Information: A New Approach to
Operationally-Driven All-Source Information Management Washington, D.C. 24-26
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