

## **Details of strategy due to Congress this year AUTHORIZERS WANT ENHANCED ‘OPEN SOURCE’ INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM**

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A defense spending bill passed by the House and Senate before the holidays directs the Pentagon to beef up its efforts to glean intelligence from publicly available sources.

“With the Information Revolution, the amount, significance, and accessibility of open-source information has expanded significantly, but the intelligence community has not expanded its exploitation efforts and systems to produce open-source intelligence,” states the text of the fiscal year 2006 defense authorization bill approved by both chambers late last month. The president is expected to sign the bill soon.

Open source advocates say U.S. intel agencies can collect gobs of useful data from publicly available mediums -- including obscure Web sites, limited-circulation documents, sermons, and data held by universities and private companies. These advocates claim such mediums often contain potentially volatile information, which they say can be collected without using covert methods.

One of the leading open source intel (OSINT) proponents on Capitol Hill, House Armed Services Committee member Rep. Rob Simmons (R-CT), in recent years has pushed legislation calling for federal agencies to enhance their open source programs.

Simmons and Eliot Jardines, the newly appointed assistant director of national intelligence for open source efforts, will headline an upcoming conference, titled “IOP ‘06: Information Operations, Open Source Intelligence, and Peacekeeping Intelligence,” which will be devoted to a range of OSINT issues. The event -- organized by long-time defense open source intelligence guru Robert Steele, founder of the Marine Corps Intelligence Command and CEO of OSS.net, Inc., is slated for Jan. 16-20, just outside of Washington.

Critics, meanwhile, say the government’s increasing use of open source data to craft intel reports and assessments could hinder increased public disclosure on intel matters. Opponents claim the use of copyrighted source materials by federal open source outfits could create new obstacles to public disclosure.

For their part, House and Senate authorizers have sided with open source advocates.

The production of open-source intelligence is a valuable intelligence discipline that must be integrated into intelligence tasking, collection, processing, exploitation, and dissemination to ensure that United States policymakers are fully and completely informed,” states the legislation. “The dissemination and use of validated open-source intelligence inherently enables information sharing since open-source intelligence is produced without the use of sensitive sources and methods,” it adds.

To bolster the Defense Department’s ability to collect, examine and utilize open source

intel, which was endorsed by the highly regarded 9/11 Commission in its 2004 report, the authorization conferees have directed the defense secretary to “develop a strategy for the purpose of integrating open-source intelligence into the defense intelligence process,” according to the text of the bill.

To that end, the authorization measure directs Pentagon officials to submit a report describing the facets of the open source intelligence strategy by the middle of the year.

According to the legislation, the plan -- which the authorizers dub the “Department of Defense Strategy for Open Source Intelligence” -- should spell out a range of specifics, including:

- \* the amount of money over the future years defense plan it would take to establish a DOD-wide “robust” OSINT program;
- \* “how management of the collection of open-source intelligence is currently conducted within the Department of Defense and how that management [could] be improved”;
- \* “the tools, systems, centers, organizational entities and procedures” used by the military to collect, process, exploit and dole out intelligence data gleaned from publicly available sources; and
- \* “how open-source intelligence [would] be fused with all other intelligence sources across” the military.

The legislation also calls for DOD to describe in its report on the strategy how the under secretary of defense for intelligence and the service intel bosses would oversee open source efforts.

Additionally, the lawmakers want Pentagon officials to describe how they would incorporate a new “open source intelligence specialty” into the Pentagon and service-specific personnel systems. The provision in the bill also directs DOD to develop an OSINT-specific training plan.

The legislation also suggests some on Capitol Hill believe non-active personnel could be used to glean information from publicly available sources. The bill directs defense officials to include in the report details on how the military might utilize “intelligence personnel of the Reserve components to augment and support the open source intelligence mission.” --  
*John T. Bennett*