COMMENTS

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Foreign Liaison and Intelligence Reform:
Still in Denial

Dr. Jennifer E. Sims’s article, “Foreign Intelligence Liaison: Devils, Deals, and Details,” (IJIC, Vol. 19, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 195–217) is quite wonderful in all respects save one: it deals only with secret government-to-government intelligence liaison, and makes no reference at all to the many non-secret, nongovernmental, and non-intelligence liaison and information sharing arrangements that have been under development for the past eighteen years, and are just now about to explode into global reality. Bottom-up collective public intelligence is here to stay, and the new standard, defined by the Swedish Ministry of Defence, is Multinational, Multiagency, Multidisciplinary, Multidomain Information Sharing (M4IS). As I note in on the inside flap of my latest book,1 “Sharing, not secrecy, is the operative principle.” While now obvious to the rest of the world, it is necessary to add here that the sharing of non-secrets among nongovernmental organizations is the defining aspect of M4IS, and governments, while they may be the catalysts for such arrangements, are largely the beneficiaries, not the benefactors, of M4IS.

In as much as my own article on “Peacekeeping Intelligence,” based on a presentation I made in Sweden in December 2004, subsequently appeared in IJIC (Vol. 19, No. 4, Winter 2006–2007), I will say no more about the seven tribes, or the other rather obvious fact that open source information in 185 languages, including 12 still-relevant variations of Arabic, now comprises 80 percent or more of what the government needs to collect, process, and analyze. Despite this, the U.S. not only spends less than one-tenth of one

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percent of its total secret intelligence budget on open sources but also the Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Open Source (ADDNI/OS)—to whom the Intelligence Community has pledged its complete support—is not a Program Manager, has no real authority, and lacks any staff other than (at last awareness) two people on rotation. This is simply not serious management, one reason why the Department of Defense is completely justified in going its own way.

I agree wholeheartedly with my friend Dr. Sims on the matter of information and intelligence metrics, one reason why Team OSS includes Thomas J. Buckholtz, author of Information Proficiency: Your Key to the Information Age. Tom has led the knowledge-management, computing, and telecommunications practice for the 4,000,000-person Executive Branch of the United States federal government. He also led a program that catalyzed $100,000,000 in recurring annual benefits for a $6 billion corporation—in other words, metrics can help enhance one’s Return on Investment (ROI). However, and I say this as one who supported Martin Hurwitz, then Director of the General Defense Intelligence Program (GDIP) when he tried to do this in 1990–1992, there are two major flaws in all prior and current approaches to metrics for intelligence: flaw #1 is that they are not tied to policy outcomes, and flaw #2 is that no one—and especially the high-end defense technical collection agencies—is held accountable for failing to show a reasonable return on investment in the larger context of our total intelligence analysis needs.

Continuing Reluctance

My observation on connecting intelligence to budgets and interagency behavior, that is to say, rational unified national security programs in touch with reality, will no doubt inspire sighs of exacerbation from all those who remain in denial and continue to believe there should be a wall between intelligence and policy. These are the same people who have refused—with the exception of Joe Markowitz and Gordon Oehler—to take open sources of information and lower-tier instability threats seriously from 1988—when Commandant of the Marine Corps Al Gray made this an issue in his seminal article, “Intelligence Challenges of the 1990’s,” as published in the American Intelligence Journal (Winter 1988–1989)—to this very moment.

The Importance of History

History is the context for intelligence and policy metrics. This is about ends, ways, and means—about sustainable outcomes that must be guided by intelligence, but can be achieved only through wise policy. The Intelligence
Community’s (IC) failure to break with the administration’s policy intent on invading Iraq without regard to reality or intelligence or a coherent grand strategy—and our compounding failure to resign our commissions and go directly to the American public (here I include the Joint Chiefs of Staff, not only the leadership of the U.S. Intelligence Community—will stand in history as a much greater failure than that associated with 9/11. I plan two metrics-related initiatives in the next few years.

1. Over the next few years we will begin cross-walking the entire U.S. federal budget against reality, with a focus on diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) investments. Henceforth, the public will see very clearly the relationship between how the taxpayer’s dollar is or is not spent wisely, and the growing threat to the nation’s future security and prosperity, both of which must be defined globally. This will be done for each of the Combatant Commanders (COCOMS) as their understanding of the art of the possible matures, for the COCOMS are ultimately the hubs for interagency campaign planning in the real world. Over a year ago, OSS Inc. warned on our Web site of al-Qaeda’s planned “death of a thousand cuts” against oil and related above-ground water and electrical conduits. Today, we have Exxon on the one hand saying there is no threat to the continuing supply of oil,6 and on the other hand an excellent summary of al-Qaeda material from the Center for Islamic Studies and Research,7 which confirms our earlier diagnosis: Bin Laden understands two things that the current U.S. administration does not: 1) the most vulnerable attack points for impacting on U.S. energy costs are in Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Venezuela; and 2) raising the cost of oil is vastly more harmful to America than killing its troops, and has the rather lovely (from an al-Qaeda perspective) outcome of transferring vast amounts of additional wealth from the West to the Muslim countries exporting oil, as well as populist Latin American leaders who share their disdain for the Bush administration. Now that is a metric: if al-Qaeda can take oil prices to triple their existing costs, and America’s combined collective national intelligence fails to devise an energy independence plan, as well as make the case for withdrawing U.S. troops from Muslim countries, then perhaps the nation will deserve whatever fate the Gods have in store for it.

2. As a longer term objective, OSS wants to see those of its clients committed to M4IS sponsor a detailed data-mining of history, beginning with the digitization of Chinese and Iranian history, as these are the two lynchpin countries for their respective regions. Metrics can be overlaid on a historical issue-matrix that shows public statements by the other party; American posturing and ignorance of the meaning of those statements; consequent behaviors by the other party, and the resulting long-term cost
to America for having failed to pay attention to the lessons of history or the open source statements in proper context.

**Thoughts on Reform**

On that note, I offer observations on the two excellent articles on intelligence reform contained in that same Summer 2006 edition of *IJI*: one by Arthur S. Hulnick, on "U.S. Intelligence Reform: Problems and Prospects," and the other by Robert D. Vickers Jr., on "The Intelligence Reform Quandary." I take no issue with either except in the following two respects:

1. The U.S. Intelligence Community appears oblivious to the fact that Information Operations (IO) is the new boss in town. I confess to having had to learn this myself, but I am fortunate in being close to some very special people in Defense, and they have taught me not only that secret intelligence is a minute fraction of all the information that must be collected and made sense of, but that both secret and open source intelligence (OSINT) are themselves—even with the very considerable contributions (OSINT) has been making since General Peter Schoomaker (later the U.S. Army Chief of Staff) directed its integration in 1997 across all Special Operations Forces commands and practices—less than 20 percent of the total that must be integrated, made sense of, and acted upon in a timely fashion. While select elements of the IC understand the importance of both secret and open geospatial information, of the urgent need to integrate all U.S. government (USG) operational, logistics, acquisition, and administration information in near real time, with all state and local law enforcement and select related civilian transportation and other infrastructure data, including financial data, the IC as a whole appears nearly catatonic when it comes to dealing with this larger interagency IO reality, and never mind the implications of doing so on an M4IS basis!

2. Large Scale Internet Exploitation (LSIE) and internal data mining are not the full solution. I completely support the LSIE initiative, and hope that an appropriate mix of capabilities is selected from the private sector to migrate the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) toward being able to do LSIE in 185 languages and 12 Arabic variations—certainly I would not consider for even a moment the same people who screwed up Trailblazer at the National Security Agency (NSA) or so many other programs for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and across varied elements of the defense spectrum. But the era of proprietary special programming is over! The days of sweetheart deals and incremental increases in massive omnibus contracts and a complete lack of accountability for failing to be effective in massive data-mining efforts that
are only text-based (and generally only demonstrated in English) and that fail to scale or meet their speed and relevance targets, are over. Medium and small businesses have long been the pioneers, with select larger enterprises like International Business Machines (IBM) also reinventing themselves and doing a better job of also integrating medium and small providers of “best in class” capabilities. The current trend in government contracting toward a mandated 33 percent and more enforceable earmarked small business subcontracting is a good one. The questions that FBIS has devised for LSIE are truly impressive, and in combination with the Solicitation from the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC), offer some hope for the future. But two elements from the Open Source Center (OSC)/FBIS approach to OSINT are missing in action (MIA):

a. Off-line information and direct observation remain vastly more important to the security of the nation and specifically of its Armed Forces and Foreign Service personnel overseas. As Chief of Staff Schoomaker recently noted in his Posture Statement to Congress: “The greatest source of our intelligence are the Iraqi people in these towns.” To that I would add a variety of localized monitoring needs specific to IO that FBIS has failed to prepare for and must now abdicate to others: the mapping of key communicators across all dimensions of society, and their relationships to competing views of key concepts such as the Caliphate, or the incidental killing of Muslim bystanders by suicide bombers; the in-depth monitoring of school papers and texts that can help the U.S. map major directions in teaching and learning by an entire emergent generation that are harmful to the country’s future prospects; the deep exploration of history and particularly official statements on any given issue going back 200 years (e.g., China on the Spratley Islands, or Iran on its alternative to the Caliphate). I could go on. The Internet remains less than 20 percent of the open source environment that must be monitored, and is not to be confused with electronic mail patterns, instant texting, shared images, the deep Web, or the growing migration of voice communications into free but difficult to track Internet offerings.

b. All that America must accomplish to survive, stabilize, and prosper cannot be done in isolation from its coalition partners. This is why the Coalition Coordination Center (CCC) at the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) may be, together with the IO global monitoring initiatives of the U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) and the direct observation initiatives of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), one of the single most important resources available as the U.S. strives to actually understand the “lower tier” world that Boyd Sutton and Keith Hall told then-Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet in July 1997—after a comprehensive year-long review at the Assistant Secretary level across the entire USG—would require no less
than $1.5 billion a year as an “insurance policy” for early warning on issues not adequately covered by classified means. They were told “fu-ged-ab-oud-it” by Mr. Tenet, the same individual who chose to ignore the Aspin-Brown recommendations on OSINT. Multinational Information Operations Centers (MIIOC) are the logical adjunct to the well-conceived Joint Intelligence Operations Commands or Centers (JIOC), as is a National Inter-Agency Collaboration Center (NIACC) at the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). They will both provide, and benefit from, the commercially-based Open Source Information System—External (OSIS-X) that is being implemented for varied international clients and relies heavily on SILOBREAKER as the common delivery, sense-making, and information-sharing platform.

The Emerging Scenario

I end with two observations:

1. The IC (and the larger USG) are inside-out and upside-down, and denial remains the order of the day. I very much admire a cartoon that recently appeared in *The Intelligencer*, and have inserted it here courtesy of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO). As the Summer 2006 issue of *JJIC* so richly communicates, most of those associated with or commenting on the IC remain fixated on the chaotic kludge of secret bilateral, mostly technical stovepipes that have developed over the past 50 years, and are largely oblivious of the urgent need for starting with OSINT (right-side-up) instead of secret technical collection (upside down), and for starting with America’s coalition partners (outside in) rather than unilaterally (inside out).

2. Public collective intelligence is emergent, from the bottom-up. Citizens armed with cell phones prevented the third hijacked airplane from hitting its intended target on 9/11, and citizens armed with OSINT will, from this day forward, begin confronting the Enrons, Exxons, and Executive Branch
leaders (as well as corrupt legislators) who choose to ignore reality and mis-serve the public interest through the abuse and manipulation and side-lining of secret or proprietary intelligence. Intelligence has become personal, public, and political, and I for one plan to keep it that way. The line is drawn: use open sources and serve the public interest. Or not.

REFERENCES

1 Information Operations: All Information, All Languages, All the Time—The New Semantics of War & Peace, Wealth & Democracy (Oakton, VA: OSS International Press, 2006, with a foreword by Congressman Rob Simmons (R., CT) and a Technical Preface by Dr. LCdr Robert Garigue, RN Canada (Resigned)). A 50-slide briefing on the book, with words in Notes format, is at www.oss.net/OI

2 This somewhat important insight by Dr. Sims is relegated to reference 9 in the cited article.

3 Our data mining partner, the Texas Data Mining Research Institute, has documented 20:1 returns on investment, with $4M a year in data mining identifying and eradicating $80M a year in fraud within a specifically targeted industry. Within the Silicon Valley Hackers Conference, a slightly different but still important metric has long been agreed to: publishing one useful bit of information to the Internet leads to 100 new bits being sent to the author without solicitation, with ten of them being useful—hence a 100:1 noise ratio, but also a 10:1 return on investment for sharing.

4 General Gray’s article is posted to www.oss.net and easily found by searching for the title of the article.

5 Wisdom, in my view, is a combination of consistent morality (the Golden Rule applied both internally and externally), a proven policy process that allows all legitimate stakeholders to air their views and concerns in a timely and deliberate fashion; and adequate Intelligence and Information Operations (120).

6 As published on their Web sites and numerous advertisements in the media, with one in particular, appearing on the Federal Page of the Washington Post on 2 March 2006, to which I responded with a press release and a letter to Exxon’s leadership. On the next day, to its credit, Energy Bulletin featured the OSS press release, with a supporting online commentary from Scientific American. The various links are at www.oss.net within the Collective Intelligence portal page, comments and links for 2 and 3 March 2006, respectively. My original commentary on the “death of a thousand cuts” al-Qaeda strategy is in my review of Robert Pape’s Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicidal Terrorism, at http://www.oss.net/extra/news/?id=2693.

Today, for under $1M, the OSINT Branch at SOCOM answers 40 percent of all Global War on Terror (GWOT) requirements using only open sources. The CIA has had similar results documented in the 1990s.

A detailed extract, commentary, and links are at the 1 March 2006 section of the Strategic Peacekeeping Portal Page at www.oss.net

Our briefing on the possibilities for multinational information operations centers, one for each COCOM, as presented to representatives of the 90 nations on 27 January 2006 at CENTCOM, can be seen at www.oss.net/MIOC

Both the original unclassified text report on “The Challenge of Global Coverage,” as written by Boyd Sutton, and his powerpoint presentation to an international audience on 18 January 2006, can be seen at the general conferences portal page beginning 12O '07 at www.oss.net. The Aspin-Brown recommendations, based in part on my winning the Burundi exercise against the entire IC with six telephone calls, found our access to open sources to be “severely deficient” and recommended that funding for open source access be a top priority and that open sources also be a top priority for DCI attention.

SILOBREAKER, at www.siobreaker.com, is available to the public (both sources and the over-arching analytic-toolkit) for $199 a year. It is superior, and cheaper, as well as full of more relevant information, than any of the traditional commercial aggregators of information for sale by the document, who continue to offer raw text in isolation from sense-making tools, or the “free” search engines that take your time instead of your money and offer no sense making tools whatsoever. It has replaced a tailored capability we have been using for 10 years at a cost of $150,000 a year.