

ME04020390

[Redacted]

Event: [Redacted] NSA, SINIO (SIGINT National Intelligence Officer) for Counterterrorism (CT) within the DDO July 2001 - present

Type of Event: Interview

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Special Access Issues: None

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Team Number: 2

Location: NSA, Ft Meade

Participants - non-Commission: [Redacted] GC Office.

Participants - Commission: Col. Lorry Fenner, Gordon Lederman

BACKGROUND (U)

[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] served in the Air Force from 1972-1980 in England and at NSA (Ft Meade, MD) as a Russian linguist. In 1980 he was hired by NSA as a Russian linguist in A Group (responsible for the Soviet Union). In the mid-1980s he served in Australia at [Redacted]. He then served a tour in the 24/7 command post at NSA (National SIGINT (now Security) Operations Center - NSOC). He was later assigned to the G Group Staff [Redacted] in Current Operations. Between 1992 and 1995, [Redacted] served as Branch Chief and was responsible [Redacted]

[Redacted] His responsibilities included analysis and production, as well as dissemination of intelligence. From 1995-1996 he was assigned as the NSA representative to CTC. From 1996-1999 he managed the day-to-day tasking of overhead (satellite) collection systems for the Overhead Collection Management Committee (OCMC). From 1999 to June of 2001 Mr [Redacted] was the NSA representative to the [Redacted]

[Redacted] Starting in July 2001, Mr [Redacted] has served as NSA's SINIO for CT.

NSA REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CTC (U)

[Redacted] As the NSA representative to the CTC, [Redacted] was NSA's liaison and he also saw all CIA CT traffic. He was responsible for passing information both ways. The goal in operations was to [Redacted] Overseas they worked through foreign liaison. He also helped with analysis. It was a very positive experience to work on the Middle East with CIA. As Deputy he was also responsible for ORCON (Originator Controlled) material and sanitization of reports of US persons material to share between agencies. As far as information sharing, he could show the NSA analysts how their reporting was used which gave them necessary feedback on how

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to support CIA operations even better. He also set up CIA visits to NSA which helped with trust and rapport which was essential to breaking barriers. His other roles included managing the other integrees and analysts. Mr [Redacted] did not know much about WTC 93 or the Bojinka plot as he was on the periphery of CT during that time. In his first day at CTC they caught Ramzi Yousef.

[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] said the CTC mission strategy was [Redacted]. He was not involved in any CTC or NSA resource decisions or any specific operations. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] He emphasized that the CTC was a community organization using foreign intelligence and was outward looking (it did not have a domestic mission). For domestic issues, CTC would hand them off to others like the FBI. [Redacted]

SINIO/CT AND THE IICT (U)

[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] predecessor as SINIO was [Redacted]. In between them [Redacted] was the acting-SINIO. As SINIO/CT, Mr [Redacted] defined the CT subject matter for NSA. He attended all the forums and interagency meetings. He also now acts as liaison to the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) and the Interagency Intelligence Counterterrorism Committee (IICT - which was formerly in the CTC) and the IICT secretariat, the Community Counterterrorism Board (CCB). The TTIC head is John Brennan. Mr [Redacted] the SINIO/CT, is the Chair of the Requirements Subcommittee of the IICT which meets quarterly. The IICT has [Redacted] agency representatives from the IC and meets monthly. [Redacted] Mr [Redacted] coordinates on all the IICT Alerts, Advisories, and Assessments. He also liaises with the National Intelligence Council (NIC) and coordinates on the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) on terrorism, as well as on [Redacted]. Mr [Redacted] recalled that in 1992 there were [Redacted] NIEs on Terrorism including [Redacted] and there was another in 1997.

[Redacted] To address concerns and challenges, Mr [Redacted] said that the NSC and HSC have SVTCs (Secure Video Teleconferences). Fran Townsend at the Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) of the NSC hosts the threat meeting daily at 9am and the analysts' discussion at 3pm. The NSA/CT Product Line people attend the analyst SVTC. Those included in the SVTC are the intelligence agencies including those within the Department of Homeland Security, TSA, Office of Naval Intelligence, Coast Guard as well as the Secret Service, DoJ, FBI and HHS. [Redacted] discusses strategy with the Assistant Secretary weekly. Before 9/11, he attended a weekly VTC with Dick Clarke, but it was unilateral - he just listened - on CT Production. As SINIO he reports to [Redacted]

[Redacted] in the Signals Intelligence Division (SID) in the office currently called S17. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] He insures the customers get responses to their requests (he works with [Redacted] to do that). When he first started as SINIO it was under S113 under [Redacted] sits on the NSA SINIO Council with the other functional and regional/state SINIOs.

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[Redacted] For warnings, there was a "tear desk" [Redacted] in the 24/7 NSOC. They sent things to the normal customers for dissemination or the FBI. [Redacted] CTC and IICT are responsible for CT All-Source warnings. Before 9/11, those responsible for warning were the Joint Intelligence Task Force - Counterterrorism (JITF-CT) for the military and CTC for the rest of the government. Now it is the TTIC.

[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] also addressed how he measures his success as SINIO. The way he assesses his performance includes whether there is more CT reporting from SIGINT that provides for the unique access and insight gained from these sources/methods. He also includes whether he helps the IC understand better what SIGINT can do for them and manages their expectations (what NSA cannot do). He also must insure that the [Redacted] and NIEs provide accurate portrayals of SIGINT materials/reporting. In explaining what SIGINT can do and cannot do, he reminds decision makers that SIGINT [Redacted]

[Redacted] But in order to do CT effectively the USG needs multi-disciplinary intelligence. [Redacted]

[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] believes that in the last two years many people have come to understand SIGINT better. Policymakers are reading more of the SIGINT reports. More now call for the SIGINT assessments (analytic products rather than just reporting), especially national customers. NSA also has more customers for their reports now in general.

[Redacted] As to whether the IC is a learning organization, Mr [Redacted] said that right after 9/11 there was an influx of people into CT who had to learn the business. NSA knew they couldn't just continue to do "more of the same." They learned they needed to stop the sole focus on the day-to-day to do more strategic analysis and SIGINT Development

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[Redacted] Mr [Redacted] also observed though, the better NSA gets, the more demanding the customers become. But more demanding customers help NSA get better and better too. [Redacted]

[Redacted] As to an overall CT strategy for SIGINT, Mr [Redacted] cited the February 2001 National Strategy that had four pillars. He also thought he remembered a DCI strategy, but couldn't remember what it was/is called. He believes there is one for TTIC, Department of Homeland Security, and law enforcement. He was unsure about its implementation though. Mr [Redacted] said he does not work with the ADCI for Collection or the ADCI for Analysis and Production, but the DIRNSA does. [Redacted] does not work with the DDCI for Community Management either.

[Redacted]

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[redacted] From Mr [redacted] experience, the IICT brings together the CT agencies for discussions. He manages the subcommittee on requirements which meets quarterly and they update the "tiers" of terrorists and groups from [redacted] [redacted] indicate the greatest threat (capability and intention) and indicate what kind of action the IC will take for each tier from constant surveillance to periodic reviews. This contributes to the new National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) which is automatically reviewed every six months under [redacted]

[redacted] This Tier system is now done at the TTIC since the IICT moved from CTC to them. [redacted] feels he can effect change on terrorist organizations and [redacted] according to the perceived threat. [redacted]

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[redacted] Seven members always attend the IICT Requirements Subcommittee meetings – State, CIA, DIA, NSA, NIMA, FBI and Department of Homeland Security. The military services and others occasionally attend and/or attend other subcommittee meetings. The IICT and tier system are helpful but the challenge is still great.

[redacted] Mr [redacted] was clear that the DCI is the boss and ultimate head of the IICT. [redacted] agencies are represented and they all have a security cleared representative. He sometimes helps write SIGINT Amps or "amplifications" which take a general tasking and offer more specifics to focus the NSA collection effort.

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[redacted] At the IICT sessions they had agendas that would include experts briefing on their topics: [redacted]

[redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [redacted] DIA briefed [redacted] someone else briefed CBRN; and a National Defense University (NDU) professor [redacted] briefed on International Terrorist Organizations. Their monthly roundtable is mostly analytic during which they have heated discussions on alternative interpretations; it is a competitive analysis forum. Mr [redacted] was not sure if there were other analytic forums like this. [redacted] said the NICB gets involved if collection is required to answer a question. In Mr [redacted] view, the policy/intelligence nexus is not IICT driven, but is NSC driven – as with raising the color level of the alerts.

WARNING AND INFORMATION SHARING (U)

[redacted] Mr [redacted] said the process the IICT uses for issuing Alerts, Assessments, or Advisories is that an agency representative volunteers to draft a piece. It is sent to other members for coordination before being disseminated. Mr [redacted] has not seen customer feedback on their products but suspects Mr Brennan does. When asked about the timeliness of this process, he gave an example, a warning was issued on [redacted]

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which DIA wrote on force protection for the IICT. It was coordinated with the [REDACTED] usual members within [REDACTED] hours and disseminated.

[REDACTED] Mr [REDACTED] indicated there is discussion about roles and missions regarding CT between agencies. These discussions especially focus on DHS/IAIP and TTIC relative to threats and warning. Gen Libutti at DHS has now finally been confirmed as IAIP, and the IC is finding out there is not as much overlap with preexisting agencies as they first assumed.

[REDACTED] Mr [REDACTED] said he was surprised by the scope and magnitude of the 9/11 attacks and that they took place in the US. He had actually been following the threats throughout the summer of 2001 and knew there was an operation in the works and was still surprised. For the Winter Olympics in 2002, the FBI set up [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with federal, state, and local law enforcement. They could all see each others' information real-time. They set this up early enough that it was "well-oiled" in time for the event. He felt this should be the model for information sharing. He cited [REDACTED] as another model, but said it is a rougher one.

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