



(U) Foreign Partners as a Linguistic Resource

FROM: [REDACTED]
Operations Group of NSA's Foreign Affairs Directorate (DP1)
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QUESTION:

(U) NSA's foreign partners represent a valuable linguistic resource to the Intelligence Community. Is there a central access point in which to access their talents -- like a distributed linguistic network?

ANSWER:

(S) You are right. Foreign partners do represent a wealth of linguistic skills. A recent, brief survey of partner language capabilities revealed that 24 partners had capabilities in 43 languages. The short answer to your question is that access to foreign partners -- for any SID mission needs (not just language support) -- would be coordinated by the Operations Group of the Foreign Affairs Directorate (FAD's DP1).

(S) The longer answer is that FAD has initiated an effort, called Foreign Affairs Strategic Directions (FASD), to help match up SID mission needs with foreign partner capabilities. Recognizing that NSA has gaps between what its customers want and what the U.S. can provide with its own resources, FASD is structured to help identify foreign partners who can help close those gaps.

(S) The starting point for the FASD process is in SID. While the process to engage SID is just beginning and not fully exercised, the plan is to have SID identify those gaps with which it is willing to have a foreign partner involved and provide detailed information regarding the requirement. (SIGINT Director MG Quirk has identified four general areas where foreign partners could help: access to denied areas, low-density languages, analysis and reporting, and SIGDEV. Your interests mesh nicely with SID's focal areas.)

(U//FOUO) Then, FASD would work with the various country teams and data bases to look across all the existing partnerships and evaluate each against both objective and subjective criteria. Objective considerations would identify those partners with the capability of taking on a requirement. Subjective considerations would look at such issues as a partner's likely willingness, reliability, stability, and skills. The results of these two reviews would generate a shorter list of potential candidates for a particular requirement.

(U//FOUO) The next step, a cost/risk/benefit analysis of pursuing this requirement with each of the candidates, would be performed as a joint SID-FAD effort. This analysis would look in detail at what would be needed for a particular partner to take on a particular task, i.e. What vulnerabilities are we revealing by asking this partner to take on this task? What equities are at risk? Would we need to share a data base or provide equipment?

(U//FOUO) The end result would be a ranked list of partner candidates with disclosure of what it would cost to make it happen and what NSA is likely to get in return. At that point, it would be up to SID management to give the go-ahead to FAD to approach a partner.

(S) While the FASD process might seem somewhat complex, the intent is to look across the partners to best match up skills with mission needs and to ensure that NSA gets the best possible return on its investment in foreign partnerships.

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