(TS//SI) When Seconds Count: Forwarding High-Priority Traffic

FROM: Janice Strauss
Deputy Chief, CSRC Targeting and Mission Management (S3C3)
Run Date: 08/16/2005

(S//SI) How vital intercept is delivered in just minutes, instead of hours or days.

(U//FOUO) Sometimes sending and receiving data quickly is more than a goal; it can have real life-or-death consequences. The following narrative provides a recent example of just such an instance and how the Collection Strategies and Requirements Center (CSRC) reached across the Enterprise to spearhead a solution.

(TS//SI) In late 2004, a severe latency (time-of-intercept to analyst) problem at NSA-Georgia (NSA-G) came to the attention of the Iraq Issue Management Team (IMT) and others at NSA-W. With responsibility for providing time-sensitive information and reporting to U.S. forces deployed to Iraq in support of the warfighter and counterterrorism, **NSA-G could not tolerate the hours, and sometimes days, it was taking to receive much of the high priority GSM traffic** being forwarded from the SCS Baghdad Annex. Due to the CSRC's Enterprise focus, its Office of Targeting and Mission Management (TMM) was designated the primary contact for determining the cause(s) of the latency and recommending potential solutions.

(TS//SI) The TMM Technical Director, [redacted] collaborated with other members of a virtual GSM Latency working group, consisting of CSRC, NSA-G, SCS and Iraq IMT personnel, to produce the "Report on Data Latency Problems at NSA/CSS Georgia" (found on the CSRC website). This report, which relies heavily on data retrieved from the YELLOWSTONE dataflow tracking and metrics reporting system, provides an in-depth analysis of the factors (i.e., architecture, data volumes, priorities, selectors, and latency) that contributed to this situation. It also includes a set of recommendations and areas for improvement.

(TS//SI) Some recommendations were easily implemented with minimal impact on the corporation and have already been put into motion. These include the use of the Voice Collection and Analytic Processing (VCAP) tool by NSA-G, SCS and S2E to ensure selector tasking leads to highly relevant product reports. In addition, SCS has initiated efforts to engineer a more efficient and effective architecture at SCS Baghdad. Other recommendations involve architectural changes across the Enterprise, requiring significant re-engineering of current and future systems.

(TS//SI) SIGINT Systems Engineering is being asked to take the lead in defining and standardizing priorities, enforcing system clock synchronization, and requiring all new or modified SIGINT systems provide metadata to YELLOWSTONE.

(TS//SI) Early results indicate improvements are being realized. **Latencies for priority 1 and 2 GSM collection have decreased to within 8 to 10 minutes** , resulting in increased confidence that NSA-G can provide real-time support to the troops in Iraq. As enterprise solutions are further defined and implemented, latencies are expected to decrease even further, providing the quick response necessary to adequately support the warfighter in Iraq.