(U) Write Right: The Style Manual vs. USSID 300 -- er, USSID CR1400

FROM: [redacted]
of the Reporting Board (S12)
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(U) Several correspondents have raised the issue of what belongs in which reference, with regard to certain classes of reporting instructions, and which reference document takes precedence. It is true that the old USSID 300 contained detailed formatting instructions, such as "indent paragraph five spaces" and "do not use the pound character (#) for a number," but this was because of transmission system constraints (remember the days of reporting in all capital letters?). Those constraints are slowly being done away with, and we hope to move such of those instructions as still make sense from the USSID to the SIGINT Reporter's Style and Usage Manual , or the Desktop Publishing Standards , where they belong.

(U) In the meantime, since it takes a long time to coordinate changes to a USSID, and that process should be used for more substantive changes, keep the rationale in mind when a conflict arises regarding guidance. Answer these questions: is it in the USSID for a good reason (call the Reporting Board or Reporting Policy and Guidance if you can't tell)? Does it make a difference to the reader in terms of comprehensibility? In other words, **don't sweat the small stuff, but do make sure that it IS small stuff.** We can work these issues out if we all keep a reasonable attitude.

(U) This brings us to our continuing revision and updating of the Style and Usage Manual.

(U) Things even we won't bother to quibble about: **cell phone vs. mobile phone.** Yes, it is true that most mobile phones now do not use cell technology and that therefore "mobile phone" is more accurate. It is also true that most Americans call all mobile phones "cell phones" now, and our Commonwealth partners tend to stick with "mobile." Some target countries use one term, and some the other. Decide whether this is really an issue in your reporting before you call us for arbitration; is it just a matter of translation, or is it an indicator of the type of technology?

(U) Things we do bother to quibble about: **the abbreviation for "also known as."** We prefer to use periods after the letters, even though we are told that that is a less common usage these days, but as sure as we say, "Oh, go ahead and spell it 'aka,'" a Foreign Minister Aka will be appointed somewhere in a target country... so take a nanosecond and stick in those periods, please.

" *You should not aim to be understood, but to be impossible to misunderstand.* " - Marcus Fabius Quintilian, Roman rhetorician.

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