



## **(U//FOUO) NSA's Foreign Partnerships: How Are They Classified?**

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(TS//SI) Most of NSA's partnerships are classified SECRET, but a few are TOP SECRET due to political considerations:

- Austria
- Israel
- Sweden
- Taiwan

### **Austria**

(TS//SI) Austria is, by law, a neutral country. During the Cold War, its relationships with foreign military organizations were considered extremely sensitive and were tightly controlled. The Austrians continue to guard closely their partnerships with foreign intelligence organizations, and have requested that NSA provide the highest level of protection to this partnership. As a result, the fact of a partnership between NSA and the Austrian Military Intelligence Service is classified as TOP SECRET COMINT.

### **Israel**

(TS//SI) In September 1970, the partnership with Israel was formally acknowledged in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Since November 1991, NSA has operated under a DCI directive that allows the release of selected CAT III (current equivalent is TOP SECRET//COMINT) information to the Israeli SIGINT National Unit (ISNU). The Israelis have reciprocated with a similar policy.

(TS//SI) Information revealing the existence of the US-Israel SIGINT agreement, or any collaboration or liaison on SIGINT matters between the US and Israel, is classified TOP SECRET//COMINT. While it is not officially documented, the TS classification was most likely due to the political sensitivities in place at the time the relationship was begun.

(TS//SI) The overall relationship with the ISNU was compartmented in VRK channels under the cover term "ARABESQUE" until May 1992; the cover term for the cryptanalytic exchange between NSA and the ISNU was "CARAVAN." Although no longer officially compartmented, in VRK/ECI channels the respective relationships with the ISNU are still frequently referred to as "ARABESQUE" and "CARAVAN."

(TS//SI) To this day, some of the projects that we conduct with ISNU are highly compartmented.

### **Sweden**

(TS//SI) Based on a 1954 agreement between NSA and GCHQ (later ratified in the 1956 UKUSA accords), GCHQ had the lead with Sweden for COMINT matters. NSA had the lead for ELINT and, as things evolved, technical SIGINT issues for both COMINT and ELINT. In 2004 we mutually agreed that our 50-year-old arrangement was no longer operable since we, NSA, needed direct access to the Swedes on substantive COMINT matters (Counterterrorism, Combating Proliferation, the Russian target, etc.)

(TS//SI) Therefore, we drafted a paper that was signed by NSA's Principal Director for Foreign Affairs, GCHQ's head of Foreign Relations, and the Director General of Sweden's SIGINT Service (FRA), allowing NSA to deal with the FRA on COMINT issues without pre-coordination with GCHQ. The paper also requires both of us to keep the other informed as to what we are doing

with the FRA, and requires the FRA to dedupe if both GCHQ and we are separately asking for the same or similar exchanges. As a result of this change, our COMINT relationship with the FRA has burgeoned on both sides. The relationship with Sweden is protected at the TOP SECRET level because of that nation's political neutrality.

(S//SI) As a related aside, the same 1954 agreement gave us (NSA) the COMINT lead on both Denmark and Norway, and deferred any decision on Finland.

## **Taiwan**

(U//FOUO) When the United States recognized the PRC (People's Republic of China) in 1978, it also in effect "derecognized" the ROC (Taiwan). Since the United States did not officially recognize the ROC, we did not have an embassy in Taiwan but instead established the American Institute of Taiwan. At the same time, the United States needed to de-establish military bases and remove our military presence in Taiwan.

(TS//SI) Without the opportunity to have NSA personnel stationed on Taiwan to maintain our SIGINT relationship under the cover of the embassy or the military, NSA, with the cooperation of Taiwan authorities, established a notional corporate cover to account for its personnel. This presence of NSA personnel in Taiwan under a notional corporate cover is protected by the TOP SECRET//COMINT classification.

(TS//SI) Although we recognize the PRC diplomatically as the one China, the fact that we maintain a SIGINT relationship with Taiwan, which the PRC considers one of its provinces, makes the relationship TOP SECRET//COMINT to protect this politically sensitive issue.

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(U//FOUO) This article is reprinted from the *Foreign Affairs Digest*, May edition. In case you are wondering, the fact that NSA has SIGINT relationships with the Second Party countries (UK, Canada, Australia, NZ) is UNCLASSIFIED.

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