



(C//REL) Getting Linguistic Help from Outside NSA

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Run Date: 07/10/2006

(C//REL) NSA uses the National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC) when it needs additional linguistic capability.

(C//REL) Virtual language translation? Sounds like a good idea, but will it work for NSA? Since 11 September 2001, one of NSA's top priorities has been the acquisition of additional foreign language capability to support the war on terrorism, as well as other missions vital to national security. Still, NSA's pool of language analysts has not always been enough to meet all needs. In 2001, Congress, recognizing that NSA was not the only agency facing such challenges, sought a way to alleviate the problem by establishing the National Virtual Translation Center (NVTC) under the Patriot Act, and funded the Center in the 2003 Intelligence Authorization Act.

(C//REL) This legislation sanctioned the NVTC as a clearinghouse of language resources for the Intelligence Community (IC) and IC partners by **using other government agencies, academia and private industry to provide timely and accurate translation/transcription of foreign intelligence material.** Congress in 2005 authorized and appropriated funds directed at stimulating NSA's use of the NVTC and to emphasize congressional commitment to the IC-wide challenge of acquiring foreign language capability. NSA management fully supports the use of the NVTC, recognizing this as one of the few external venues for NSA language support.

(U//FOUO) In that same year, NSA issued [SID Management Directive 408](#): *The National Virtual Translation Center Process and the Language Technical Assistance Process*, which outlines how to request NVTC services, as well as how to utilize NSA language analysts to respond to other agencies' requests for NVTC language assistance. The policy designates the Analysis and Production organization's Analyst Resources staff as the NSA broker for NVTC support, working directly with product line elements and NVTC staffers to coordinate details of the language requirements and the transfer of materials between the two organizations.

(U//FOUO) The staff expeditiously coordinates each request and determines all handling requirements specific to the material and its source. Oversight and Compliance and the Office of the General Counsel participate in each review to ensure that all appropriate protections are in place when NSA determines that the NVTC will be the provider of choice for the translation.

(U//FOUO) The NVTC is a broker for translation services and could augment NSA's current language capabilities using state-of-the-art technology and personnel located throughout the United States. **NVTC management is currently building a nationwide network of translators and transcribers who can work from home or from sites established near their homes.** They are also identifying and validating through SID Oversight and Compliance and Associate Director for Security and Counterintelligence (ADS&CI) additional secure sites across the United States that can service and protect requests involving NSA materials.

(C//REL) Critics might say it's a risky business to provide NSA material to non-NSA personnel, and the cultural challenge of working within the NVTC charter to be a "virtual" language service is a significant one. But in its relatively short life so far, the NVTC has become a trusted outside source of language support for many IC elements. **It's time for NSA to manage the risk and take advantage of the expansion of language capability offered by NVTC.**

(C//REL) There is an additional assurance for NSA that the NVTC can take on the challenge of processing NSA materials. This is because the current NVTC Director and several of his staff members are experienced NSA language analysts on tour at the NVTC. Their presence and experience will help to ensure that the material released to the NVTC is sanitized as necessary,

not attributed to NSA, protected by non-disclosure agreements, and that internal networks are prepared to handle the soft-copy transfer of data in the appropriately secure way.

(U//FOUO) The NVTC has the potential to play a pivotal role in transforming NSA's approach to language processing. Once NSA has established proper procedures for using the NVTC, bridged the technical infrastructure between the two agencies, and gained cultural confidence in NVTC use, we will be well-placed to bring additional language capabilities to bear against our intelligence targets.

(U//FOUO) For some background on the NVTC, see the following articles:

- [\(U\) Translators for Hire](#)
- [\(U\) View from the NVTC Director's Seat](#)

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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108