



(U) Students Seeking Employment in SID: Impressions from a Recruiting Trip

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(U) A SIGINTer traveled to two universities to help recruit talent for NSA. What did the students want to know about working at the Agency?

(U) We were supposed to be there from 1000 to 1600, and by 0945 the lines were already long. My fellow recruiter and I were busily loading NSA information onto our table, and arranging pens, pencils, notepads and other gifts for students to pick up. We were at Ohio State University that week in April, setting up for a job fair. All of those eager seniors were waiting for us to be ready. Finally, we were set, and the questions began.

(U) "*Do you have any jobs for investigators?*"
"My major is communications; are you hiring in that field?"
"I'm fluent in Iraqi and Kurdish, and I want to work for NSA!"

The questions are thick and fast as dozens of students line up for information about NSA. As a long-time Chinese linguist and an alum of Ohio State's graduate school, I had been asked to represent NSA as a technical recruiter for linguists. Since 2004, besides my usual job in Ops2A, I had also visited OSU four times, and Ole Miss twice.

(U) Usually when I visited OSU it was to conduct job fairs and to talk to students of international studies and of languages. The Old Miss talks were more fun for me, as Ole Miss has set up a DOD-funded institute for intensive Chinese training. I was able to meet with the Chinese instructors, sit in on classes, and was very impressed with the students that the Croft Institute was training. But always, there were questions.

(U) "*Does the Agency tap your phones at home?*"
"What's the pay like?"
"It's expensive to live in Washington, isn't it?"
...and of course, the one I heard most often, "*Where is the Agency located??"*

No one had ever heard of Fort Meade, and we had to explain its location often, even if we already had discussed this in our talk. Occasionally we would have a cynic who wanted to know if we tapped his phone, or were doing things illegally, but we had to be careful to neither confirm nor deny, and generally would refer them to the NSA Internet web page.

(U) Such responses were actually quite rare, as students were excited by the possibility of finding jobs at our Agency, and were really disappointed to hear that we were not hiring people in what they had studied for four years. And while we were expecting juniors and seniors, we also saw freshmen and sophomores and others who had already graduated who were interested in what they should study, how they should write up their resumes, or what could they do to be hired by NSA.

(U) News of the new FLIP (Foreign Language Incentive Pay) incentives made a real impact as students wondered if they really could live on NSA starting salaries on the expensive East Coast. Some of those interested were complaining that they had applied, but had gotten no feedback or response.

(U) Others were, shall we say, "interesting." There was a guy who stated that he was a doctor, but he wanted to work for NSA. He wanted a job, no matter what the job. He would take out the trash. In fact, he was thinking of offering to work for free the first year, what did I think about that? And why hadn't the Agency responded, when he had applied last year? In his thickly accented English, he kept me busy for far too long trying to impress me with how good a worker

he would be. Meanwhile, other students were waiting.

(U) What kind of training did we offer?

Should he/she go on to graduate school, or try to be hired first and then go to grad school at night -- which would be best as far as chances of being hired?

On and on the questions came, as we literally saw hundreds of students at that Ohio State University job fair, and I loved it. Talking to students who were eager to begin the life I so enjoy here... communicating with them the opportunities for jobs, training, and growth... listening to their experiences and looking for that special someone with just the right skills that we needed... It was a wonderful break from the normal day-to-day action at NSA.

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