



**(U//FOUO) GCHQ Intelligence Production Head Outlines Present and Future Priorities**

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(U//FOUO) Jon Ashton, GCHQ Intelligence Production Head, gave an informative talk on **GCHQ's current intelligence priorities**, on 12 July at Menwith Hill Station. He also discussed priority changes over the next few years and risks/future areas of concern.

**(U) Current Situation**

- (S//SI) **Counterterrorism** (CT) remains a high priority, absorbing 30% of GCHQ's resources. Despite last year's London bombings, Mr. Ashton predicted CT resources will not be increased and will continue to focus on foreign targets.
- (S//SI) **Afghanistan**, with its critical need for support to military operations, and **China** are both getting more attention as targets. Interest in **Russia** is waning at GCHQ, as evidenced by the decision to offload its Russian aviation mission from RAF Digby to Elmendorf, Alaska (AMOC). China's explosive technological and industrial growth has dramatically increased its energy demands. The Chinese deal with Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and others for oil supplies, and there is concern China may use weapons technology as barter.



*(U) British troops prepare for action in Helmand Province, Afghanistan (Reuters)*

- (S//SI) **Weapons collection** (10% of GCHQ's resources) and **Counter Proliferation** (CP-12%) remain important. Weapons intelligence, while not often yielding short-term gains, was vital to the success of operations such as Iraqi Northern Watch, during which UK pilots flew over 30,000 missions with no losses caused by enemy action. CP efforts are essential to minimizing the risk of a cataclysmic loss of life. A terrorist with advanced weaponry is a nightmare scenario, so CP merits every resource it gets.
- (S//SI) **Serious crime and Sub-Saharan Africa** rounded out GCHQ's chief interests. Crime consumed 6% of effort with pressure likely to increase due to the creation of SOCA, the Serious and Organized Crime Agency. Although a low-priority target, Sub-Saharan Africa's volatility meant GCHQ often piggybacked on other resources and/or employed ad-hoc collection against this target region.

**(U) Long-term trends/changes:**

- (U//FOUO) **Demand for intelligence** will continue to outstrip GCHQ's ability to supply. Constrained by the UK government's emphasis on health, education and social services, GCHQ must juggle competing priorities and say "no" to less pressing demands.
- (U//FOUO) **China and India** will grow in importance. One out of three humans will be Chinese or Indian by 2014. China's industrial, technological and foreign policies merit more attention in the near future: Who will the Chinese deal with to meet their ever-increasing energy demands? Will China proliferate weapons and weapons' technology? Recruiting and retaining skilled linguists will be crucial. India's evolution will likely be more benign, but there are economic and military issues to monitor.



*(U) A guard walks past a poster of Chairman Mao during an anti-corruption exhibition in Nanjing (Reuters)*

- (U//FOUO) **Iraq:** Mr. Ashton expressed hope that Iraq's priority will fall in the next five years and peace dividends will be realized.
- (S//SI) **CP** would continue to rise steadily in importance and countries such as Iran, China and North Korea would remain priority targets.
- (C//SI) **Electronic Attack** from hostile governments or freelance hackers will continue to be a source of concern, even though a major attack has not yet occurred. The UK and US need to work together to better define priorities. Computer Network Defence resources lag behind those allocated for Computer Network Exploitation.

(U) **Risks:**

- (C//SI) **Internet Protocol** -- As the Internet and associated technologies disseminate throughout the world, it is becoming more difficult to exploit targets' communications. We've been very successful in producing niche successes, but have not found corporate solutions to tackle the huge amount of data.
- (C//SI) **SIGINT Competitors:** Other agencies are moving into the SIGINT arena. Cooperating with them and being proactive will help keep us at the forefront.
- (C//SI) **Divergence of US/UK policies:** Although there is not yet evidence of such a trend, it is not a given that our two nations will always share similar goals and priorities.
- (S//SI) Lack of access to **targets' internal communications** will reduce our ability to meet customers' demands.

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(U) *Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)*

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