



(U//FOUO) SIGINT Assessment Reports: A Look Back

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(S//SI//REL) NSA has a long history of writing assessment reports, dating back at least to the 1960s and the war in Vietnam. As today, some of the offices that did this type of reporting labeled them as assessments, and some did not. The offices that covered Iran in the late 1970s around the time of the fall of the Shah issued "**synthesis reports**," reports that did not have a special designation in the title.

(S//SI//REL) The vast majority of current reporting on Iran at that time was based on a single piece of traffic or a few intercepted messages that covered a short period of time and/or activity. The Office of G6 (Middle East and North Africa) issued two specialized forms of reports during a period of increased interest: synthesis reports, and situation summaries.

(S//SI//REL) Analysts wrote synthesis reports based on published reports, included relevant unpublished material, and examined a single topic or issue over an extended period of time. The purpose of a synthesis report was to tell the SIGINT story and complement the current reporting, which at the time consisted of hundreds of individual translated messages. This in-depth look at a selected topic provided the reader with a baseline for future reports on the subject, put the SIGINT facts into context, and allowed customers to better discern and evaluate changes in target tempo and activity.

(S//SI//REL) While much of this should sound familiar, it is interesting to note that **this kind of reporting was considered controversial within NSA**, as it bordered on "finished intelligence" -- the province of CIA and DIA. These reports, issued from the division or office level, used material from the various production elements both within the office, which covered military targets including Iran, as well as outside G6. They included some judgment as to the overall trend during a specific timeframe, while highlighting the SIGINT story, difficult to discern within the volume of current reporting during crisis situations.

(S//SI//REL) The legacy of G6's synthesis reports and similar term or assessment reports from other offices is seen in today's NSA assessments and crisis situation summaries. Our customers have always valued NSA's opinions, and **today's analysts are actively encouraged to provide their judgments** and assess the importance of SIGINT in a comment or short paper, as well as in formal SIGINT assessments. Our customers continue to benefit from putting the SIGINT pieces together with analysts' strategic views, while current reporting continues apace.

(U//FOUO) On a related note, see the article ["Early Results Look Good: Assessment Report Update."](#)

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