(TS//SI//REL) F6, NSA Texas, and Yakima Research Station Collaborate on Venezuela Survey

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Run Date: 11/03/2006

(U//FOUO) This article is the first in a series of four that will illustrate the value of collaboration amongst the SIGINT Development Community. It demonstrates SSG's (SIGINT Development Strategy and Governance) guidance to leverage expertise wherever it exists to address our toughest SIGDEV challenges.

(TS//SI//REL) The challenges were clear: Obtain valuable signals intelligence against one of the recently added targets to the Strategic Mission List -- Venezuela. Yakima Research Station (YRS) had been collecting FORNSAT signals for years against this emerging target but the large regional satellite beams visible from YRS had been examined and re-examined in the search for Venezuelan communications with only moderately successful results. Many more FORNSAT signals were available in the form of smaller spot beams that transmitted down to earth in limited areas, none visible from YRS. Since the signals weren't going to come to the collectors, the collectors would have to go to the signals. The Special Collection Service (F6), NSA Texas and YRS made the decision to move the point of collection into an area with visibility into these spot beams.

(S//SI//REL) While remote surveys had been done before, they generally suffered from long analytic lag times and a lack of flexibility for target pursuit. The solution to this was to perform collection at the front-end and remote the data back to waiting CONUS teams for in-depth SIGDEV analysis and target tipping on the fly.

(TS//SI//REL) Each organization brought a crucial element to the table: F6 had the requisite geographical access and antenna, and NSA Texas and YRS had the analytic and processing capability against the Venezuelan target. To reduce the lag time, NSA-T SIGDEV and YRS formed a joint analytic team at YRS. As a YRS analyst sent to the F6 location (US-966Q) sampled more than 400 signals over the course of three weeks, the analytic team systematically combed through the data, characterizing the targets and networks seen on the signals. Targets of potential interest found during the initial phase of the survey were tipped back to both NSA-T and NSA-W production analysts who, in turn, provided immediate feedback. The quick analytic turnaround resulted in two dozen carriers being re-sampled in response to TOPI requests.

(C) Coordinating the efforts of widely dispersed players in this survey and communicating the results to a large, diverse customer set was no small job. The team made extensive use of the Extended SIGINT Enterprise Corporate Server (ESECS) to track progress and share findings both during and after the survey.

(TS//SI//REL) The results speak for themselves. The survey

uncovered dozens of links carrying traffic for Venezuelan targets of interest and additional new collection requirements were levied. Based on the team's findings, one TOPI offered that this was "...the best survey ever." With the lessons learned from this survey, a second three-week survey was performed to analyze more spot and regional beams that had the potential to serve Venezuela. Once again, F6, NSA-T and YRS collaborated via the use of ESECS.

(S//SI//REL) Perhaps one of the greatest accomplishments of the survey was that it provided one new model for analytic collaboration. With the relatively low financial cost of a handful of TDYs, analysts from across the NSA enterprise worked together to maximize resources and find previously unavailable sources of intelligence against this high-priority target.