



**(TS//SI//REL) Getting the 'Ungettable' Intelligence: An Interview with TAO's Teresa Shea**

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(U//FOUO) SID today recently interviewed Teresa Shea (pictured), Chief of Tailored Access Operations (S32):

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- (S//SI//REL) Tailored Access Operations' (TAO) job is to "create surgical access to computers and networks of our most important targets" -- in other words, extracting information directly from a target's computer system rather than intercepting it while it is being transmitted. We realize that much of this effort is highly classified, but can you give a sense of the scope of your operations? How much intelligence is obtained by TAO?

(TS//SI//REL) TAO's contribution to the Intelligence Community is in providing unique intelligence not available through alternative sources. It is not about the quantity produced, but the quality of intelligence that is important. TAO's Endpoint mission, also called Computer Network Exploitation (CNE), has produced some of the most significant intelligence our country has ever seen. For example, access to our very hardest targets -- Russian and Chinese government entities, terrorist targets (for both geolocation and for fleeting communications), Iranian leadership, and several nations' WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction] programs -- has proven to be invaluable. We currently have access to over 258 target sets in 89 countries.

- (U) Where do you see TAO headed in the years ahead? How will your operations change?

(S//SI//REL) TAO needs to continue to grow and must lay the foundation for integrated Computer Network Operations (CNO) at NSA/CSS. Our future as an Agency is in cryptologic operations with an ability to exploit targets for foreign intelligence, conduct active defense or enable and support Computer Network Attack as an integrated part of military operations. For NSA to succeed in this, TAO must lay the foundation by acquiring pervasive, persistent access on the global network. We must also work to integrate our passive and active access systems to provide this nation and its allies a real-time operational capability that proactively acts on target networks. Even through this tremendous growth, however, we will retain our critical focus on the hardest intelligence targets and on keeping ahead of new security technologies.

- (U) As a TAO manager, what are your biggest challenges?

(U//FOUO) Retaining our highly skilled workforce. TAO employees have extremely marketable skills and are in very high demand elsewhere. Of course we have one key inducement unmatched anywhere else: this remarkably exciting mission that allows them to see results on a daily basis. TAO employees are here because they want to make a difference for our nation and its allies.

- (U) If you could change one thing at the Agency, what would it be?

(U//FOUO) I would recommend we do everything we can to delegate personnel decisions. As a Group Chief, I would like the responsibility **and accountability** for hiring, firing, rotation, personnel selections, salaries and Senior Executive promotions. As I mentioned in the answer to the previous question, my greatest mission need is my people and I need as many tools as possible to hire, reward and retain them.

- (U) What was your first job at the Agency?

(U) I was hired as a summer student just prior to finishing my engineering degree at Georgia Tech. I won't say what year that was, but it was a long time ago! In this position, I wired circuit boards and racked and stacked systems.

- (U) *What was the most memorable experience you've had during your career?*

(U) The opportunity to brief the President of the U.S. when he visited NSA Headquarters in January.



(U//FOUO) *President Bush at NSA. (Teresa Shea is visible in background.) (Reuters)*

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(U) Here are other recent SID *today* interviews:

- [\(U\) What Is It Like to Do Cryptanalysis in the Year 2006? \(An interview with \[REDACTED\], a recent graduate of the Cryptanalysis Development Program.\)](#)
- [\(U//FOUO\) Charting a Course for S1: An Interview with Rear Admiral Meek](#)
- [\(U//FOUO\) Interview with \[REDACTED\] Entering His 52nd Year at NSA](#)

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