



**(S//REL) The State of Covert Collection -- An Interview with SCS Leaders (part 1)**

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*(S//REL) The Special Collection Service's (SCS) mission is to collect, process and report SIGINT from official U.S. establishments abroad. To find out what's happening in the covert SIGINT world, SID today interviewed [REDACTED] (SCS Director) and Ron Moultrie (SCS Deputy Director), pictured.*

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**(U//FOUO) Could you briefly tell us how SCS came to be?**

Mr [REDACTED]  
(TS//SI//REL) I was fortunate to be around when SCS was first created. For many years, the Army and the Air Force each ran their own covert SIGINT collection programs. The Army, for example, had 13 covert sites around the world - I always called them the "13 original colonies" - and the Air Force had some sites in Eastern Europe. In the mid-70's, NSA and the services agreed to start "civilianizing" and consolidating those programs under NSA's control.

(TS//SI//REL) Meanwhile, CIA was running a covert SIGINT program of its own. The CIA and Army/Air Force programs had different missions: the CIA supported the local Ambassador and CIA Chief of Station, while the military programs principally supported national/strategic requirements. Sometimes this meant that a single Embassy housed two separate covert facilities - such as one Army, one CIA - at opposite ends of the same building! Congress saw this as duplicative, and directed NSA and CIA to consolidate all of the covert programs into one entity.

(TS//SI//REL) The result was that all of these covert programs were brought together as the SCS in 1979. It quickly became a true community, a collaborative SIGINT effort. We started out with 40+ sites, tasked with both missions, namely to support both local and national requirements.

[REDACTED]  
(U//FOUO) US Embassy, Sanaa, Yemen

**(S//REL) SCS is a joint NSA-CIA effort. Is running such an interagency program very different from managing an NSA-only program?**

Mr [REDACTED]  
(S//SI//REL) Yes! NSA and CIA are both on board with this effort, and share the same objectives, but each agency has a different construct for resourcing it. As a result, one or the other agency may have to make a unilateral decision within the context of their overall program that will have an effect on SCS. Hopefully, when one agency is short on funding, the other may be able to contribute more.

*Mr Moultrie:*

(S//SI//REL) I spent 24 years at NSA before going to work at CIA. But at SCS, we wear purple badges, a sign of our status as a joint organization. An interagency program is a lot like a two-parent family, as compared to an NSA- or CIA-only effort, which can be compared to a single-parent household. Since we support both Agencies, we must be mindful of both "parents." But it's not an NSA way, or a CIA way - it's truly a hybrid, or an SCS way. You can't tell the NSAers and the CIA people here apart. We have two separate HR systems, but our operations are completely unified.

Mr [REDACTED]

(S//SI//REL) Since we're a joint organization, our leadership succession planning is also different. The SCS Director and Deputy Director positions are occupied by one manager from NSA and one from CIA. They each stay in their position for two years. When that term is up, the Director rotates out, the Deputy Director moves up to become the new Director, and a new Deputy Director is appointed by the departing Director's agency. Then the process repeats itself again every two years.

**(S//REL) NSA has traditionally operated in close cooperation with its Second Party colleagues, while most CIA operations are NOFORN. Has SCS helped to bridge that gap in some way?**

Mr [REDACTED]

(S//SI//REL) Yes, there is a FIVE-EYES forum called STATEROOM that brings together US and Second Party covert operations. The forum focuses on operational constructs and technology to satisfy intelligence requirements. There is a difference, as you say, in how the two agencies approach the question of partnering with foreign agencies. NSA defaults to sharing information with the 5-EYES community, while CIA defaults to US-only sharing. The reason CIA holds this view is that they have people at risk.

Mr Moultrie:

(S//SI//REL) I'd like to make the point that it's not CIA **operations** that are generally NOFORN, but the **results**. CIA works with foreign liaison on a routine basis, but the intelligence derived from those operations is not usually shared outside US channels. As [REDACTED] explained, CIA's people are the assets at risk, while at NSA, it's the technology or the cryptographic capabilities; so they've been more conservative about sharing. That may possibly change with Gen Hayden - who is an advocate for wider information sharing - now occupying the Director/CIA position. But SCS does help bridge the gap by liaising between the Fort and Chiefs of Station on such matters.



(TS//SI//REL) *The "guts" of an SCS site: equipment racks at SCS Sofia, Bulgaria*

**(U) Regarding manning issues, have you found it easy to recruit personnel to work at SCS? Are there certain SCS positions that are more difficult to fill?**

Mr [REDACTED]

(S//SI//REL) Whether or not people want to come work at SCS depends to a large degree on their threshold for adventure! The work is extremely interesting, but traveling to exotic locations appeals to some and not others. Where else can technical or computer science folks get the opportunity to sneak through someone's "backyard" and set up covert collection? I grew up in New York and thought I'd never see anything else but the concrete canyons of New York City. However, I've been to the Taj Mahal, seen the Great Sphinx... I've been to places that are really something! But we do also try to accommodate people who have a lower level of adventurism, or who have family considerations.

Mr Moultrie:

(S//SI//REL) When I started my career, there were a lot of NSA field sites in places like Berlin, Germany, and San Vito, Italy, and a host of other sites that have since closed. But SCS still has sites scattered all over the world, for those with a sense of adventure. Working here also gives the opportunity to work closely with people from another intelligence agency - a good experience - and it has a convenient, attractive location [in a rural location outside Laurel, MD].

Mr [REDACTED]

(TS//SI//REL) On the operational side, our employees single-handedly get to collect, translate, analyze, write, edit, report, and get immediate feedback from the customer. I've had people tell me that an Ambassador told them, "Thanks for that SIGINT - that was just what I needed prior to a meeting." Once, when I was visiting our site in Panama, the Ambassador told site personnel to shut down work for a while so that he could treat them to lunch at his official residence, as a sign of his appreciation.

(S//SI//REL) In terms of skills, we are in competition for the same Urdu, Arabic, Farsi, etc. linguists as the rest of the SIGINT Enterprise - there simply aren't enough to go around. In recruiting, we have to capture the "thumb tribe's" [i.e. the younger generation raised using

computers] imagination and their desire to travel around the world. For some years we were a civilian-only outfit, but now we have about 40 military PCS [permanent change of station] billets for Army, Navy, and Air Force members. We also have some Marines; they work only at SCS Headquarters - the Corps needs them to be located here in case they ever need to deploy. We benefit from the military's knowledge and talents, and they benefit, too: military linguists have the opportunity to hear conversations unlike what they would ever hear in typically formatted tactical communications.



*(U) See the conclusion of this interview tomorrow on SIDtoday.*

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