



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

FROM: SIGINT Communications (S0202)  
Unknown  
Run Date: 11/16/2006

---

*(S//REL) Here's the conclusion of our SID today interview with [REDACTED] (SCS Director) and Ron Moultrie (SCS Deputy Director), pictured. If you missed it, see [part 1](#).*

---

**(S//SI//REL) To those who have been working at NSA for a long time, it seems as though SCS goes through phases of expanding or contracting its worldwide presence. If that is true, which phase is SCS in currently?**

Mr [REDACTED]

(TS//SI//REL) It **has** expanded and contracted over time, depending on the requirements we have and the resources available. The peak was "88 in 88" - 88 sites existed in 1988. These trends are priority-driven and resource-driven; it's costly to maintain and sustain a site. Since 9/11, as you might imagine, we've been growing, adding 12 new sites, to total 82 sites now. Sometimes we've closed down a site, only to reopen it several years later. For example, we shut down our site in Caracas because we didn't think we needed it, then [anti-American Venezuelan President] Hugo Chavez came along, and we've reopened it!

(TS//SI//REL) Right now, we're being conservative about opening any more sites, because of constrained resources. We have funding issues, just as other NSA organizations do right now. While we've been opening up new sites in recent years, our budget has actually declined slightly. We're doing our best to use our resources as efficiently as we can.

Mr Moultrie:

(TS//SI//REL) In a meeting with the Director and Deputy Director, we received a vote of confidence for SCS's future, especially as it pertains to Transformation 3.0. For its part, CIA values the unique "real estate" that the SCS sites offer - referred to as "platforms" - for their operations. SCS serves as a platform for counterintelligence operations -- monitoring hostile intelligence services that are attempting to track CIA personnel or assets. SCS is also a platform for Tailored Access, FORNSAT, Special Source, and NRO operations. So, the NSA and CIA leadership want SCS to grow, but with our limited resources, growth will be measured.

[REDACTED]

*(U//FOUO) US Embassy, San Jose, Costa Rica*

**(U) Could you describe a few new initiatives that are underway at SCS? How do you foresee things being different five years from now?**

Mr [REDACTED]

(C) One change is that we are trying to get our **infrastructure** - power and cooling - at the sites in good order. NSA has power issues, and they are dealing with Baltimore Gas & Electric; imagine what it is like to deal with "Baghdad" Gas & Electric! The State Department has started a New Embassy Compound (NEC) program at the behest of Congress, meant to make our foreign diplomatic compounds secure. We're working with State as part of that program to make sure we have the best facilities available to do our work.

(S//SI//REL) Besides the infrastructure, we want to introduce **new technology** in order to prosecute emerging target communications. To do this, we need to be wired into the R&D programs to know what technology is available. One change we've already started implementing is the Common Site Architecture (CSA). This is an attempt to get away from the legacy approach of building a unique "box" for each target. We want to have the same *hardware*

console at all of the sites, and shape it to local needs by choosing the *mission application* best suited for that particular mission. This gives us flexibility, and also gives us the benefits of standardization.

(S//SI//REL) For example, in the past, a site would report, "My box went belly-up," and we'd have to send an engineer out to fix it. With CSA, an engineer can dial in to a CSA system and do maintenance on it remotely, all without the complication of having to troubleshoot "one-off" pieces of equipment. CSA also allows the site to work around things that are broken, to be more efficient and effective. DIRNSA sees SCS as an important player in Transformation 3.0, and we need to have modernized technology on-site to support that.

(S//SI//REL) Regarding **people**, we need to recruit, train and retain the best of the best. To take full advantage of their talents, we're working with Analysis & Production to allow SCS linguists and analysts to collaborate closely with the TOPIs [Target Offices of Primary Interest]. In some cases, SCS employees **are** the TOPI for certain targets. We're also getting SCS involved in issuing new types of reporting (for us) - GAMMA, I-series, etc.

(TS//SI//REL) As part of a "[one number, maximum reach](#)" concept, SCS sites are now **tasking targets worldwide**, through [OCTAVE](#), across the SIGINT Enterprise. On one occasion, we handed a customer in Caracas a First-Instance Report, not based on collection from the Embassy rooftop, but from a Special Source collector! How did this happen? The team in Caracas knew how best to task the SIGINT System to get the needed intercept. We're grateful to SID leadership for allowing us access to the databases, and enabling that to happen.

(TS//SI//REL) We're also trying to be smart about **doing remote operations** when it makes sense; for example, when Embassies are required to reduce the number of staff due to an elevated threat level. When this happened in Saudi Arabia, we needed to find a way to downsize our presence at the site, while still supporting the Ambassador and Chief of Station. We started an operational construct called FALCON REST, by which we re-positioned Arabic linguists from Saudi Arabia to ██████ where they worked the target, target time. Those linguists in ██████ stay "in the loop" by visiting Saudi Arabia periodically to stay on top of what the Chief of Station and Ambassador need, as well as staying up on the situational awareness.

(S//SI//REL) Having said that, we don't want to remove ourselves from the Embassies unless we have to! A big part of our value comes from that direct interaction with the US officials on site that I talked about earlier. In addition, our linguists have greater target knowledge and situational awareness by actually living in-country than they would if they were working elsewhere. The CIA is now investing in more case officers, and the State Department is also increasing its presence abroad - the SIGINT System needs to be there to support them.



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

**(S) Running a worldwide operation of 82 field sites, each with its unique circumstances, must be an extremely complex endeavor. What's the key to making it all work?**

Mr ██████

(U//FOUO) I would say this: dedication and trust. I once spoke with Tom Johnson, the CNN News Group Chairman and CEO, at a time when some of us in the NSA were infatuated with the idea that CNN kept beating us in delivering the news first. I asked him what was CNN's approach. He said that they trust their people, and don't second-guess from the headquarters in Atlanta.

(TS//SI//REL) We have the same approach here. We have dedicated, trusted, skilled people; we trust them and they do it! We have people working solo, in some cases, in tough conditions. There are SCS personnel in ██████ who commute to work every day up a river in a 20-foot boat. You-name-it, including a human body, has been seen floating in that river! We trust these people to do the right thing - there are very few "mother, may I's." We're all human and sometimes make mistakes, but on the whole our people do a great job. We wouldn't do it any other way.



*(S) Aerial view of SCS Headquarters*

**"(U//FOUO) SIDtoday articles may not be republished or reposted outside NSANet without the consent of S0121 ([DL sid comms](#))."**

---

DYNAMIC PAGE -- HIGHEST POSSIBLE CLASSIFICATION IS  
TOP SECRET // SI / TK // REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL  
DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108