(S//SI//REL) From the Sandbox to Mexico: Applying Wartime Tactical Techniques to Strategic Missions

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(S//SI//REL) Intelligence Analysts: Here's a story illustrating how geospatial metadata analysis can prove useful against a strategic target, such as counter-narcotics.

(S//SI//REL)Almost everyone has seen the comical commercials about how the world would work if it were run by people with push-to-talk phones. Simple, quick and to the point. That is exactly why drug cartels love the Nextel phone (shown). You can make a phone call, radio someone quickly or have a group conference, all with one phone. With the majority of the NSAT SARC targets in Mexico using the Nextel De Mexico services, especially the direct-connect or push-to-talk function, it was imperative that capabilities be developed to fully exploit this cellular format.

(S//SI//REL)Targeting users of Nextel de Mexico is not an easy task. Any SIGINT Geospatial Analyst (SGA) who has spent time in the desert is accustomed to having vast amounts of metadata readily available to them. That is not the case with the narcotics target set in Mexico. This is primarily due to limited collection access for Mexico, much less where our targets are actually located. Also, since the iDEN cellular format is not prevalent outside of the Western hemisphere, there is much less information as to how the technology actually works.

(S//SI//REL) With the requirements identified, NSA Texas analysts set out to answer the problem in a unique way. Two SGAs with deployment experience put the iDEN collection system to work. Using collected data from the GPS embedded in the Nextel towers enabled physical mapping of the network. The SARC Target Development (TD) Branch did considerable research and acquired additional information on Mexican iDEN/Nextel tower data with physical and logical information for the entire network throughout Mexico. Shortly after receiving the network data, additional iDEN collection boxes were purchased and installed at BIRDBATH (border collection) front-end sites, completing and enhancing the iDEN collection capability along the Texas/Mexico border. In December 2008, HUMINT provided additional physical and logical information for the entire country of Mexico's Nextel service. This new network information, combined with the extended collection system coverage, allowed analysts to review metadata and determine more specific operating locations of their targets.

(U) **Collection Improvements?**

(S//SI//REL) It was soon discovered that there were unexpected issues with the collection system and database that were impeding analysis. The system was not properly associating selectors with the cell IDs collected by the system. Analysts worked closely with the local support team to understand the selectors and metadata collected by the system. The support team served as a liaison between analysts and developers to come up with new ways to easily search and identify selectors. In March 2009, a new database was introduced which allows analysts to search across collection sites through a single interface. As a result, analysts can now quickly and reliably research a number, perform a true pattern-of-life analysis, and refine the location of the targets of interest.

(S//SI//REL) To test the system, the team was provided with a single target selector and asked to perform a 30-day pattern-of-life analysis to determine the target's commonly visited locations. This led to the identification of additional targets associated with the teams initial target of interest, thus expanding the network for exploitation. It was also discovered that the targets were buying phones in blocks of 2, 4, or more with a one-up numbering sequence. These

discoveries and the pattern-of-life analysis resulted in an IGRAM which shared the results of the analysis with our customers and partners.

(U) **So What?**

(S//SI//REL) Another story of an SGA doing good work? The "so what?" of the story is two-fold. By placing experienced analysts with unmatched initiative and dedication in a situation where almost nothing was known about a technology, they were able to break the technology down to understand selection criteria, amass much of the necessary data, apply techniques to develop a network and the right tools in order to provide target analysts and customer with a better understanding of the targets' activities and actionable intelligence products.

(S//SI//REL) One specific success was the publication of an IGRAM that included the individual associated with one of the Mexican Cartel death squads, known to be hired by the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes (shown) Organization (VCFO) and who is responsible for a large share of the deaths in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The IGRAM has led to a new initiative: NSAT analysts working with customers and focusing more on locating targets by applying SGA techniques, along with communication internals, and providing a more complete intelligence picture. Customers were able to take the information in the IGRAM and focus their efforts to a specific area in which the target was active. As a result, they have now changed their Information Needs to reflect the necessity of geospatial reference information related to their targets.

(C//SI//REL) ***This is a perfect example of taking techniques developed in one environment and applying them in other targeting situations.*** This effort has clearly demonstrated that well-honed analytic techniques can be applied against a disparate set of data and still result in useful and actionable foreign intelligence information supporting the needs and operations of a variety of customers.