



**(U) What Are the Latest SIGINT Developments in Iraq and Afghanistan? An Interview with Colonel Parker Schenecker**

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(U//FOUO) SID *today* recently sat down with **Colonel Parker Schenecker** (pictured), the Deputy NSA/CSS Representative (D/NCR) to CENTCOM. COL Schenecker, who had recently returned from his latest TDY to the theater, was at Fort Meade as part of his efforts to promote NSA's Deployment Month.

Colonel Schenecker

**1. (U) What are you hearing from customers in the theater about NSA support?**

(U) Appreciation of SIGINT support is growing across the board. It is widely viewed as the "key to the realm." In fact, many times, the first thing customers mention is the importance of SIGINT, and what a huge impact it has. NSA has a strong reputation "forward," both in terms of its tradecraft and the quality of NSA's deployed workforce.

(S//SI//REL) NCR supports a range of customers in the theatre, including Ambassadors, multiple Generals, small-unit leaders, personnel in Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Enhanced Training Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Third Parties acting as SIGINT partners in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this regard, "partner empowerment" is a major growth area. 2008 was a watershed year in terms of enabling partners, particularly in Afghanistan. And the amazing thing is, we're doing this all on the fly.

(S//SI//REL) RT-RG [ [Real Time Regional Gateway](#) ] has had a major impact on growing partner involvement in these theatres, producing a "partner mall." Here, our SIGINT partners have RT-RG access via several "peering points" that allow them to not only access SIGINT data from RT-RG, but also to have visibility of the targets for units to their left and right. With the increase in partnering, however, sanitization and dissemination presents a growing challenge. Getting SIGINT to a level appropriate for release to NATO and [ISAF](#) forces engaged in reconstruction efforts and combat operations is crucial, and NSA leadership has shown a willingness to accept manageable risk and make ground-breaking decisions to get timely, actionable/meaningful SIGINT to those who need it.

**2. (U) What particular types of SIGINT information/reporting is particularly valuable to CENTCOM?**

(S//REL) SIGINT Geospatial Analysts [SGAs] have been crucial for some time in the CENTCOM theatre, and will remain so in the near-term. RT-RG and related tools have helped us become experts in providing the "where" portion of a conversation, and we maintain a consistently high standard in this area. However, as a result of shifts from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency strategies, the "what" portion of the conversation is reemerging as important in SIGINT reporting. We find that we now need experienced, "big picture" deployed analysts who can provide greater insight and lend context to the broad spectrum of information we are collecting. Although SGA and DNI [digital-network intelligence] will still be important, we need Intelligence Analysts in the theater who can tell us what is meaningful, and what the current information suggests for future developments.

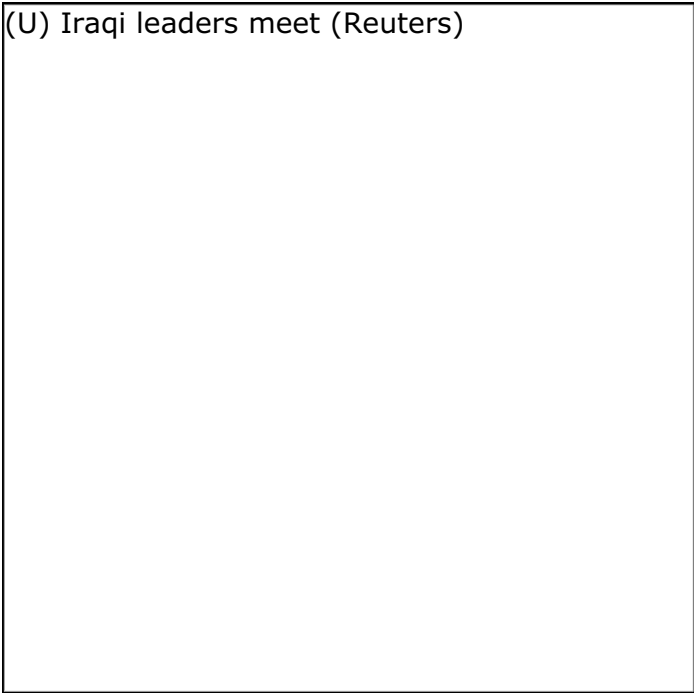
(U//FOUO) Increasing the number of deployed NSAers is a big plus, as you can not determine how to maximize support unless you are in the customer's space. Finally, technical gains and increased expertise have outstripped policy in some cases, which is forcing us to adapt policies as we go. Streamlining decision-making on policies is essential, and once again, NSA leadership

has shown a willingness to take manageable risks to maximize effectiveness.

**3. (U) Have there been any notable success stories that come to mind?**

(S//SI//REL) It's not a success story **yet**, but the NCR staff and Iraq Mission Management Team are working hard to predict future requirements in the volatile, uncertain, ambiguous Iraqi environment. Since the signing of the Strategic Framework Agreement, Iraqi leadership has accelerated the transition period so that the Iraqis can elect a government early next year, and establish a security apparatus to protect the government and the Iraqi people. Eventually, we want Iraqis to have the lead on everything, and we will provide them with the capability to be self-sustaining. The NCR team forward in Iraq really has its nose to the grindstone and is doing a great job.

(U) Iraqi leaders meet (Reuters)



(U) Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki, Iraqi President Talabani, and Kurdish President Barzani (l-r) meet. (Reuters)

**4. (U) It's Deployment Recruitment Month. What types of folks are you seeking for these positions?**

(U//FOUO) We have been overwhelmed with the willingness of some NSAers to deploy, some as many as six to seven times, to support CENTCOM's mission. The challenge is to maintain a high service standard. We have over 430 NSAers deployed in CENTCOM's theatre, all with varied skills and experience. The training challenge is how to bring the relatively junior, inexperienced analysts up to speed, while still providing valuable preparation to the more seasoned folks. To that end, NCR CENTCOM, in conjunction with the Meade Operations Center (MOC) and the NSA Deployments Office (MG3), has helped establish a training process to address the needs of both novices and experts, to maximize the potential impact of each deployer. Lately, the biggest improvement is the MOC's willingness to tailor/adapt training to suit the different analytic needs in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(S//REL) Another long-lasting development is that much of NSA's Extended Enterprise is getting involved. NSA-Hawaii supports three, 5-man Cryptologic Support Teams (CSTs). NSA-Georgia, NSA-Texas, NSA-Texas, the Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion and others have also contributed. Some of the Cryptologic Centers do some of their own training before sending their folks to the MOC for further deployment preparation. This transition over the past year has been a key to maintaining the quality of deployer.

(S//REL) Interestingly, deployments in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters have evolved differently. In the fall of '08, we had 88 deployed to Afghanistan. We now have over 180. In Iraq, we had a surge in 2007 where, within a 45-day period, we had identified, recruited and

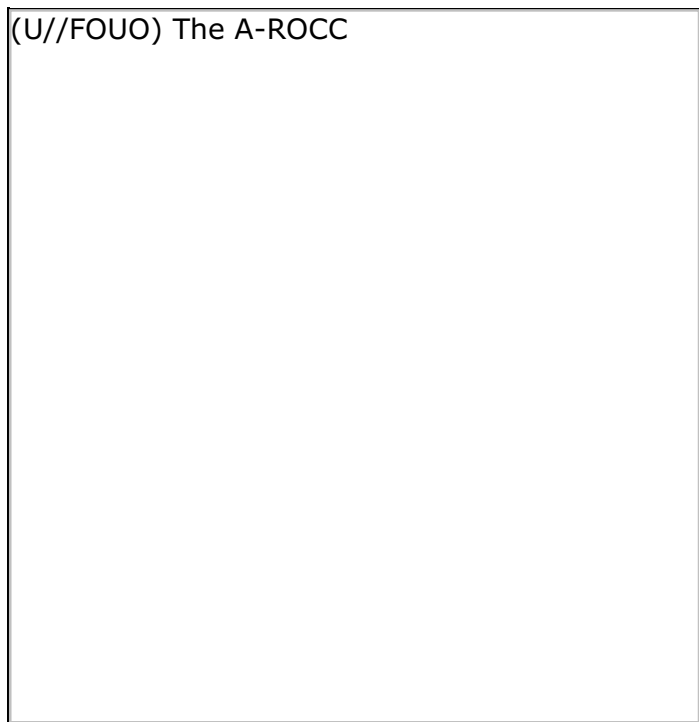
deployed 100 additional SGAs to Iraq. All in all, we have about 2.5 times as many deployed as in '07. This is a great testimony to our Agency's workforce. What's more, those deployed have incredible access to senior military commanders and decision makers, which of course should only enhance NSA's reputation.

**5. (U//FOUO) What is RT-RG's impact in the theatre?**

(S//SI//REL) As RT-RG has become more widely used in the last few years, it has exponentially enhanced our analytic capacity in the theatre. Not only important for SIGINT analysts, it helps provide situational awareness, and fosters -- and even forces -- a much higher level of collaboration: Analysts in Jalalabad, Salerno and Kabul [Afghanistan] can all communicate via chat, and can share target information. For instance, if I'm an analyst in CST23 at Combat Outpost SHANK, and one of the targets from my neighbor analyst in CST17 at Jalalabad is in my battle space, I can let him know more quickly. So it greatly enhances overall battle space visibility. Coupling RT-RG with our [ONEROOF](#) servers prevents us from being hamstrung by self-imposed boundaries ... it helps us to work a target set much more collaboratively. A Pashto or Arabic linguist working at NSA Georgia, for example, can work on a voice cut collected in theater. This greatly mitigates linguistic challenges, and allows you to tap into a much bigger cadre of available linguists& Ultimately it greatly enhances the warfighter's ability to "find, fix, and finish" the adversary. It helps with both contextual **and** geolocation info, and we are finding broader applications for RT-RG all the time -- even applications beyond doing SIGINT. For example, RT-RG can ingest Blue Force Tracker data [which shows the location of Coalition troops] to allow SIGINT analysts to alert friendly forces to nearby insurgent communications and activities. Its usefulness is limited only by our ability to wrap our head around its potential.

**6. (U//FOUO) What is the status of the Afghan Remote Operations Cryptologic Center (A-ROCC)?**

(S//REL) Planning for the A-ROCC began in the fall of 2008 (see [related article](#)); the facility is one-third complete, and will be 100% complete soon. It is designed as an "in-theater" SIGINT language processing center that will enable us to transcribe or export voice cuts from ground, air and national collection sources, and turn these into "first-instance reports." During the processing of standing up the A-ROCC, the NCR has been awestruck daily by the commitment and expertise of those involved -- from I&L standpoint, setting up work flows, etc. It is a huge success story.



**7. (U) Any final comments?**

(U//FOUO) In closing, on behalf of NCR CENTCOM, Mr. John Mulligan, I would like to thank our NSA colleagues who have volunteered to be away from friends and family, and put themselves in

harm's way in support of US Central Command. We continue to be humbled by the number and quality of our deployers, and we welcome potential deployers to go ahead and make the commitment; you will be both personally challenged and professionally rewarded beyond your wildest dreams.

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