



(U) What a Difference a Year Makes! -- Reconstructing an Iraqi SIGINT Service

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How the Iraqi SIGINT Element was staffed from the ground up (S//SI)

(TS//SI) It was just this time last year when NSA's [REDACTED], [REDACTED], MSgt [REDACTED], and a GCHQ integree, Maj [REDACTED], arrived in Baghdad to re-construct the Iraq SIGINT service. They took with them a list of potential candidates gleaned from years of targeting the Iraqi civil and military SIGINT units. Working closely with CIA, they arranged to meet potential candidates for what has become the Iraq SIGINT Element (ISE) of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS). Obviously, it was a difficult and daunting task to assess the recruits' suitability to serve in the new ISE, given that they were part of the "old regime." To assist them in the vetting process, the CIA provided polygraphers and psychologists, as well as background checks, and before long [REDACTED] and the team had their first new employees.

(TS//SI) At the same time that the FAD [Foreign Affairs Directorate] team was recruiting new hires, they were creating training programs and collection strategies to teach the nascent ISE SIGINTers how we do SIGINT. The FAD team began with the basics and had limited technical resources due to security concerns. Unfortunately the situation in Baghdad continued to deteriorate, but at the same time, this gave the ISE its first mission -- to target communications used by the former regime elements and insurgents operating in Baghdad.

(TS//SI) The ISE went operational on 27 March 2004 and began operations from its headquarters and various safe houses around town. The "bad guys" were using low-powered push-to-talk communications, in particular the General Mobile Radio Service and the Family Radio Service radios. The fact that these were low-powered radios gave the ISE its first unique capability. It began to use mobile units that could go into neighborhoods covertly, which was too difficult for Coalition forces to do.

(TS//SI) Since March of 2004, the ISE has grown to over 100 people and has proven its professionalism and trustworthiness many times over. We have continued to upgrade their equipment and skill level, which has led to a near real-time threat warning capability. These "tippers" were an integral part of election security efforts. The ISE and FAD personnel in Baghdad alerted Iraqi and MNF-I forces to threats and attacks against polling places, armed insurgent movements, VBIEDs* enroute for an attack, as well as providing unique situational awareness reports on activities throughout the city.

(TS//SI) In one year's time, the ISE has risen up out of the rubble of a fallen brutal dictator and has become a bright shining star, leading its country to a new and freely elected National Assembly.

[REDACTED]
(S//SI) Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) Headquarters Building,
home to the Iraqi SIGINT Element (ISE)

[REDACTED]
(S//SI) ISE
operators at work

* Note:

(U) VBIED = Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device

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