



(S//SI) New Release: The FORNSAT Plan

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(TS//SI) This isn't your Grandfather's FORNSAT Plan! For over 30 years, the collection and processing of international communications from foreign communications satellites (FORNSAT) has been part of NSA's balanced collection program. To maintain that balance, FORNSAT Program has planned a vigorous modernization. The FORNSAT Plan probes the current intelligence value of the FORNSAT program vis-a-vis the commercial satellite business plans for launches, services and customers. Then it lays out the current technical capability, pointing out the current and future needs and prioritizing the system gaps. These gaps form the basis for the proposed modernization. It's no surprise that the FORNSAT system is in a dire need of upgrade to exploit the technology already introduced to the commercial industry--technology that is being used today by important intelligence targets, i.e. mobile satellite phones, digital video broadcast over satellite, private satellite networks, etc.

(TS//SI) Major thrusts of this plan begin with the need for a wholesale change in the FORNSAT architecture. The last major upgrade for the program was Trans World Digital (TWD) in the mid-90s. TWD targeted long-haul international circuit-switched telephony and was designed before the Internet boom. Bottom-line is that the current architecture, primarily engineered for voice traffic, is trying to support high data-rate DNI carriers. The second major thrust is in the area of Mobile Satellite Services (Thuraya, ACeS, Inmarsat and others). These service providers illuminate their coverage areas through the use of hundreds of spot beams. Our 13 fixed FORNSAT sites cannot provide the necessary access; the plan presents a number of options, including relying on our covert partners to provide the required points of presence. Lastly, the Plan proposes ways to improve FORNSAT's SIGINT Development capabilities. Initiatives range from providing additional resources, to the concept of the "Virtual Analyst"--leveraging the various Signals Development Centers to provide signals analysis support to our covert partners.

(TS//SI) For over 30 years, FORNSAT has provided timely and significant information on a wide variety of intelligence topics that by their nature flow across national boundaries. This access has delivered transit traffic about terrorists, international crime, weapons of mass destruction, proliferation, arms control, international finance and trade, not to mention the intelligence derived from diplomatic communications, private commercial networks, airline reservations and billing data. The flexible architecture of the FORNSAT system has allowed NSA to fine-tune collection and processing and locate information relevant to the most current intelligence needs. For this reason, FORNSAT has consistently provided the information used in over 25% of end product reporting year after year. And a careful implementation of the FORNSAT Plan will ensure this trend to continue for many years to come.

(S//SI) For further information on the FORNSAT Plan, check out the [FORNSAT Division web page](#). You may also type, "go fornsat" in Webworld.

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