



## **(U) Media Leaks - Part I (repost)**

FROM: SIGINT Communications

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*(U//FOUO) Note: The two-part "Media Leaks" series ran originally on July 28 and 29.*

(U) Have you ever watched television news and heard a report that started out something like this: "Today, reliable sources revealed that U.S. intelligence has intercepted communications indicating that..."? You may have thought to yourself, "How in the world is this information getting out?" If so, you are not alone!

(U//FOUO) SID has a special office that tracks disclosures of this kind: the [SID/Intelligence Security Issues office \(S02L3\)](#). They are responsible for monitoring so-called Cryptologic Insecurities (CI), which occur when "cryptologic material or information is put in jeopardy or when sensitive information is disclosed through espionage or by unauthorized disclosure." Often, this means media leaks.

### **(U) Media Leaks**

(TS//SI) Let's take a look at some examples of damaging media leaks and the unfortunate consequences:

-- (TS//SI) Media leaks from 2000-2002 disclosed that we were collecting SIGINT against Usama bin Laden and al-Qaeda operatives:

- (TS//SI) A CBS News report from September 2002 stated "The National Security Agency, which monitors communications worldwide, intercepted a phone call from one of UBL's operatives in Afghanistan to a phone number in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia," revealing NSA sources and methods as well as the extent of our capabilities against our adversaries.  
Damage assessment: al-Qaeda immediately employed improved security measures and deceptive tactics to limit our SIGINT collection. Such disclosures prove time and time and again that our adversaries initiate active Denial and Deception tactics to thwart our capabilities.  
Follow-on action: NSA's Office of General Counsel issued a formal report to the U.S. Department of Justice of the unauthorized disclosure of COMINT information and requested a follow-on FBI investigation. The unauthorized disclosure of COMINT information represents a criminal violation and is subject to FBI investigation as such.
- (TS//SI) A November 2002 New York Times Daily News article revealed specific information regarding NSA geolocation capabilities during a very high-profile operation to eliminate a known al-Qaeda terrorist operative.  
Damage assessment: Such disclosures of NSA's role in these lethal operations hinder NSA's capability to support the ongoing fight against global terrorism. The potential for loss of lucrative source information increases astronomically.
- (TS//SI) The Washington Times reported in October 2000 that SIGINT was targeting and tracking terrorists suspected in the USS Cole bombing.  
Damage assessment: Al-Qaeda initially heightened their security awareness and practices, then in December 2001, the source went off the air, creating a significant collection gap.

(U) ...but leaks are not limited to the topic of al-Qaeda:

-- (TS//SI) A December 2002 WorldNetDaily.com article, while it did not provide specific classified information based on SIGINT product, did provide an accurate and unauthorized

disclosure of NSA's capabilities. Specifically, the article indicated that NSA had lost its ability to collect information on activities in Iran, thus disclosing a collection gap on a high-priority target for the United States. The article was released shortly after we lost collection of Iranian Intelligence Service communications.

Damage assessment: Vulnerabilities in our abilities against a high-interest target were revealed.

Follow-on action: NSA's Office of General Counsel issued a formal report to the U.S. Department of Justice of the unauthorized disclosure of COMINT information and requested a follow-on FBI investigation. The unauthorized disclosure of COMINT information represents a criminal violation and is subject to FBI investigation as such.

*(U//FOUO) Coming in part two of this article: What happens when CIs are discovered, and what is your role?*

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