



(U) My Comment

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(U//FOUO) Cindy Farkus addresses analysts' concerns regarding the inclusion of COMMENTS in SIGINT reports:

(U//FOUO) I have been closely following the initiative [REDACTED] is leading to include more insights into the SIGINT reporting. (See [yesterday's article](#).) The intelligence community and NSA will have to be more proactive in providing facts and insights to protect the nation today and for the future. In fact, I believe that including more insights into reporting and providing more assessments from our analyst experts is one of the most important things we can do to improve and better serve our customers.

(U//FOUO) It is so important, that it is one of the very first things outlined in the A&P strategy that we will roll out in the next few weeks. In the meantime, I thought I would provide some comments of my own to issues raised from the recent *SID today* articles about COMMENTS.

(U//FOUO) **Issue:** Measuring success by "counting comments" will lead to a rash of empty, meaningless COMMENTS that worsen the quality of our reports.

(U//FOUO) Cindy's COMMENT:

Absolutely! Let me be clear: S2 will NOT measure its success or progress by the number of COMMENTS that are included in our product reports. I agree that doing so would be a disaster. It would be like pretending to carry an umbrella in a rainstorm - it might make you feel better, but you are still going to get wet. The true measure of our success is the degree to which we enable our nation's leaders and warfighters to make decisions that lead to positive outcomes for the nation. Sometimes that will entail reporting "only the facts." But in most cases, we can better enable those decisions by including insight, perspective, context, and the "so what" factor by including COMMENTS, collateral, or constructing our reports so that the implications of the data are readily apparent.

(U//FOUO) **Issue:** Reality is that some customers want comments and some don't.

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

In general, this is indeed true. Certainly the Commands tend to want comments and insights. After all, these are military leaders who are used to hearing many inputs and making decisions based on them, even when some conflict with each other. Other customers - Department of State and Commerce come to mind - seem more interested in just the unique information we may have access to. Regardless, it is incumbent on us -- you, your team, and your management -- to know who wants what and to check frequently that we have it right.

(U//FOUO) Ultimately, we are trying to develop a dialogue with the customer by providing comments with some insight as to why the report answers their need. As I see it, we will follow a continuum where well-written reports with "so what" facts begin to be complemented consistently with our contextual insights. This raises the bar for everyone, and customers will demand that more insights and expertise be shared through reporting vehicles like assessment reports. Facts will always be part of reporting, but reports featuring expertise, like assessment reports, are still underdeveloped. [REDACTED] will be working the details of this issue with the division chiefs and the specific answer may vary by target.

(U//FOUO) **Issue:** What happens when analysts are wrong? How do we manage the damage to NSA's credibility?

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

I encourage every analyst to be confident enough in his or her expertise and tradecraft to include appropriately marked insights in reports. NSA offers more than facts, we offer SIGINT expertise in our target areas. Our reputation will not be hurt if analysts provide appropriately marked insights; in fact, it can only be enhanced. There will be times when legitimate differences of opinion exist, and that's ok. Remember, the 9-11 commission report encourages us to develop and share differing points of view.

(U//FOUO) There will also be times when people are wrong. But we have to take the long view. Those mistakes will prompt a very good discussion and many people will learn from that situation. Everyone makes mistakes; we want to be viewed as an organization that accepts risks but also one that deals with problems once they are recognized. This approach can only enhance our credibility in the long run.

(U//FOUO) **Issue:** What about junior, less experienced analysts providing erroneous "insight" based on partial knowledge?

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

One thing we must keep in mind is the need to convey how sure we are of the insights contained in the COMMENTS. So, for example, junior personnel who don't have deep target knowledge may want to use qualifiers ("possible" or "probable") to convey a level of uncertainty about the conclusions reached. As noted in ██████████'s [last column](#), Colin Powell once said, " *Tell me what you know, tell me what you don't know, tell me what you think; always distinguish which is which.* "

(U//FOUO) Furthermore, over time, any gaps in experience among our analysts can be filled through the process of working with editors and collaborating with the customer. We all learn from this dialogue. We also need to realize that while a great deal of experience certainly provides a "mature" perspective, those with less experience bring a fresh look and often pull us in the right direction. We hire, train, and employ very smart people and it is often said that they are NSA's best assets; lets begin to value the diversity of experience.

(U//FOUO) **Issue:** How will NSA measure success in a way that ensures a value-added product if we begin to report more than the facts? Will P3's be changed to reflect and reward individuals who do this?

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

Providing more insights from our SIGINT target experts is critical to our mission. Making generic changes will not positively affect the quality of our products - no one wants quality to suffer or time wasted on "checking a box." The magic formula for how many well-written reports, reports with comments, assessment reports, etc. does not exist - nor will it. A cookie-cutter approach will not work for all customers or targets. However, everyone recognizes that changes need to be made to the performance evaluation tools in order to effect permanent change. We need to be flexible as we consider how we measure this effort on a group and individual level. As we begin to form recommendations, we will share them with you. If you have any suggestions in the meantime, please send them to ██████████.

(U//FOUO) **Feedback:** Will training be developed to support the changes you are recommending?

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

This effort (to increase the level of commentary in our reporting) is being coordinated with the training folks, the Reporting Board and a team of S2 senior analysts, so any issues or opportunities can be integrated into training.

(U//FOUO) **Feedback:** Will the entire process be reviewed with an eye toward changing those editing procedures and policies that hinder the sharing of insights?

(U//FOUO) Cindy's Comment:

We are looking at all of the components to the process of reporting so that more insights are included in what we provide to customers. This is a big job and critical to the value we add to the Intelligence Community. Not only must we deliver the SIGINT facts, but our customers also demand our expertise. This is one of the reasons I asked you to include more insights and comments into reports over the next few months - it will help us uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the process and the customer feedback loop. Like anything, change will not occur

overnight and we will keep apprised of what we learn.

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