(S//SI//REL) UKUSA at its Best: Producing the Best Possible SIGINT on Sudan

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(U) **The Brits beat us to it**

(TS//SI//REL) Before coming to work at GCHQ as an integree in 2003, my only experience working with our British counterparts was as a competitor in an intelligence race. We shared the same line of Libyan diplomatic traffic, which provided excellent coverage of the unfolding, high-profile Pan Am 103/Lockerbie crisis. Invariably, we'd come in to work on the 9th floor of the old headquarters building only to find that the Brits had used their five-hour time advantage to scoop us. So, we'd grumble and complain that we were stuck working on less interesting items and had to settle for readdressing the GCHQ reports.

(U) **Across the pond, and beyond**

(S//SI//REL) But during my tenure here, I've come to see how this special relationship really works to the advantage of both GCHQ and NSA. I was assigned to work in the Sudan/North Africa team in GCHQ's Office of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The Sudan team at GCHQ had worked closely with its counterpart in Regional Targets (S2A21), with both focusing on the decades-long north-south war and eventual rapprochement. Cooperation between the two offices became vital as the Darfur situation came into the headlines of newspapers on both sides of the pond in 2004. There was pressure from the highest levels to produce intelligence on a target that had never been worked before and with minimal resources. I'm sure this is a situation in which many SIGINTers have found themselves; however, the moral of this story is that we used UKUSA to optimize resources and meet requirements levied by customers both in Washington and Whitehall.

(S//SI//REL) This cooperation continues today with regular exchanges of visits, VTCs, emails, phone calls, Zircon chats, etc. And our extended Sudan enterprise isn't only between NSA-Washington and GCHQ-Cheltenham. In fact, we depend on NSA-Georgia and JSSW*-Digby. We also interface regularly with our Canadian partners and ESOC**, which provides vital coverage of the African Union activities in Darfur, as well as in Chad, Sudan's pesky neighbor.

(U) **What do they speak in Darfur, anyway?**

(S//SI//REL) Our discussions and cooperation are not limited to the usual targeting and traffic issues. We also help each other out with language training and QCing (quality control). For example, some junior British military linguists freshly assigned to work Sudan were sent to the Joint Language Center at Georgia for a basic Sudanese class. This class was augmented by an arrangement whereby the senior Sudanese linguist at NSA-Georgia provided on-the-job training (OJT) to these linguists each afternoon. This senior linguist recognized the need for training, but also saw it as an opportunity to improve our efforts on Sudan -- more capable linguists equal more and better SIGINT on Sudan.

(S//SI//REL) Similarly, we at GCHQ share our language training with our counterparts at Digby. They travel down to Cheltenham for our fortnightly (that's "every two weeks" to us Yanks) training with a Sudanese native contractor. In addition, I recently went to Digby for the first of several 3-day OJT sessions with the British military linguists. This language cooperation is critical given the difficulty and obscurity of the Sudanese dialect. They speak Arabic in Sudan, but it's hard to recognize it when you're listening to Darfur rebels out in the middle of nowhere yelling on their phones. We ask each other about specific words and often call upon each other to QC scripts. In other words, we're working together to decipher traffic and produce SIGINT that is accurate to the best of our combined abilities.

(U) **It's not a competition, after all**

(S//SI//REL) The partnership works because of the attitude of all the analysts, linguists and managers involved in this effort. We recognize that it's not in our interests to compete for the best piece of the pie; instead we can leverage this special UKUSA relationship and build bridges that benefit all of us. More importantly, our cooperation yields timely and accurate SIGINT that meets the requirements of the high-level customers who monitor with intense interest the seemingly never-ending instability in Sudan.

(U) Notes:

* (U) JSSW = Joint Service Signal Wing

** (U//FOUO) ESOC = the European Security Operations Center

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