

## *Expanding the Collection and Use of Open Source Intelligence*

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### **The spy culture needs to embrace CNN and YouTube.**

During the Cold War, the Intelligence Community could identify the enemy and articulate the information that the enemy held. Intelligence was organized around stealing the enemy's secrets. But times have changed. In today's world, the key to intelligence and timely decisions is collecting and analyzing information from varied sources. Today, valuable insight and information for decision-makers increasingly comes from open sources such as Internet blogs, electronic publications, chat rooms, and video websites.

### **Spies traditionally have discounted the value of open source information.**

Although the sources of intelligence have changed over the years, the intelligence community has not. Now a vast volume of information is available through open sources, but the ability to make sense out of it hasn't kept up. So, while the spy culture is changing, it's not changing fast enough and may not be able to adapt to, or incorporate, the culture of an open source network.

### **The value of open source intelligence has increased in recent years.**

During the Cold War, information sharing was based on "the need to know." Open source information – information collected from newspapers, TV, etc. – was considered less valuable. Today, having secrets that cannot be acted upon makes them less valuable. Information-sharing standards have shifted to "the need to share." Open source products might include "man on the street" perspectives, Economist-style country assessments, video "tours" of people, places, and events, as well as constantly refreshed databases on social, economic, political, and military infrastructures of countries of interest. The State Department, for example, has launched a wiki called "Diplopedia" that has many of these characteristics.

Observers are saying the spy culture needs to become more open to "open source" information, especially in a networked world. Author Elaine Kamarck notes that the Intelligence Community "will have to rely on open source material and embed itself in the networks of journalists, academics, businesspeople, political consultants, and scientists that already have the experience to sort out complexity in the world." Many of these people, however, do not have – and may not want – a security clearance.

### **The president should create a new, open source, analytic arm of the government.**

- The President should direct the Director of National Intelligence to create a separate directorate for open source intelligence. This directorate would have no connection to secret organizations, but would ensure that a separate channel of pure open source products to be seen by the same policy makers who see the secret information.
- The intelligence community should have freer access to information and embed itself in a series of internal government networks. To make this work, it should standardize security clearances and classification process. All IT systems should have multi-agency compatibility.
- The intelligence community should embed itself in a series of external networks – local police, other countries, academics, and business circles. This network can be managed by the National Intelligence Council.

In addition to the separate directorate for open source intelligence, analysts throughout the Intelligence Community need full access to open source materials so they can incorporate them into their classified products. This would require tools that allow integration of text, graphics, and video, as well as tools that allow rapid translation of text and audio. ■

## Resources

Kevin O'Connell, "Recasting the Role of Open Source Information in US Intelligence" (IBM Center for the Business of Government) *Forthcoming, Spring 2008*.

[Elaine C. Kamarck, "Transforming the Intelligence Community: Improving the Collection and Management of Information" \(IBM Center for The Business of Government\) 2005.](#)

["Building a Comprehensive Open Source Intelligence Capability: Perspectives from IBM Corporation" \(IBM White Paper\) 2005.](#) .



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