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**REVIEW OF CSIS HUMAN SOURCE
OPERATIONS OVERSEAS
(SIRC STUDY 2007-05)**

Security Intelligence Review Committee
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1 INTRODUCTION

The complexities of dealing with human relations make human source intelligence (HUMINT) collection a unique challenge to manage in comparison to purely technical information sources. As intelligence scholar Nigel West notes, "individuals willing to betray their families, tribe, country, or other allegiance may prove difficult to handle and liable to work to their own agenda, fabricate information, or become a double agent."¹ Sources enter into arrangements with intelligence services through active recruitment by an agency (which can be voluntary or coercive), referral from another agency, or as walk-ins.² All sources have their own motivations, which may include greed, ideology, desire for resettlement, patriotism, or adventurism. The use of a human source is therefore risky since a service cannot be sure of a source's true motivation.³

Despite the inherent challenges, human sources remain an essential tool for understanding the threat environment and a target's intentions, information that is not always evident from photography, communication intercepts, open sources or other methods of collection.

¹ Nigel West, 2006, "Human Intelligence (HUMINT)", in *Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 129.

² "Walk-in" is a term for sources who volunteer their cooperation by making a direct approach to an intelligence service. See West,

³ See West, 126; Walter Laquer, 1985, *A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limitations of Intelligence*, New York: Basic Books, 25; Mark Stout, 2007, "Émigré intelligence reporting: Sifting Fact from Fiction", in Loch Johnson (ed.), *Handbook for Intelligence Studies*, London: Routledge: 253-268; and Michael Herman, 1996, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 65.

A properly developed and well-positioned source can be an efficient and cost-effective intelligence tool. Although it is difficult to measure the cost-effectiveness of a specific human source operation, particularly given the challenges of measuring the value of intelligence collected, we can nevertheless compare the cost of a human source program against an intelligence agency's operating budget.

1.2 Objectives and Methodology of this Review

Many SIRC studies include a review of a selection of human sources.

The purpose of this review is to examine the challenges and benefits of running human source operations,

SIRC assessed the Service's actions against the *CSIS Act* and Ministerial Direction and, where appropriate, operational policy and examined their relevance in the evolving context of CSIS's foreign intelligence collection activities

The review period was January 1, 2005 to January 31, 2007. SIRC selected these dates to account for changes introduced by CSIS's May 2006 reorganization of its operational branches

SIRC examined the administrative and financial files

2.1 Current Status of Operational Policy

It would therefore appear timely for CSIS to extract common principles and themes from its various directives to develop an overarching policy structure. SIRC understands that CSIS and the Department of Public Safety have been developing new Ministerial Direction. **SIRC recommends that CSIS prioritize the development of formal operational policy to guide its overseas human source operations upon receipt of the new Ministerial Direction.**

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In SIRC Study 2006-08, SIRC raised questions concerning the effectiveness of CSIS's
practice of handling overseas sources.

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6 THE CHALLENGE OF ASSESSING RISK

All activities
must be assessed for potential risk,

CSIS policy does not have a scale that establishes thresholds between different levels of risk nor does it use a standardized language when assessing risk

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SIRC understands that assessing risk is tremendously complex; however, as CSIS's foreign operations continue to evolve, the Service must rationalize its risk assessment procedures, and its reporting in operational plans. **SIRC recommends that CSIS standardize its risk assessments with detailed and consistent terminology that is reflected in operational policy.**

Such standards would provide operational staff with a calibrated tool to measure and assess risk and ensure that all factors are considered.

7 CONCLUSION

CSIS is an organization whose structure, policies and procedures have had a primarily domestic orientation since CSIS came into being in 1984. The enlargement of CSIS's foreign intelligence collection program will challenge CSIS to adapt to different operational environments overseas. The introduction of the International Region, the transition of Security Liaison Officers and the approval of Executive directives to guide certain foreign operations are part of the steps in managing this transition. However, further work remains to be done.

This study is a preliminary assessment of CSIS's human source operations overseas.

Nevertheless, after almost five years of experience, it would seem appropriate for CSIS to extract common principles and themes from its various directives and to develop an overarching policy structure to govern its foreign source collection program.

One issue that can be addressed in the short term is the development of a standardized scale of risk and a clear and consistent use of risk terminology in CSIS operational planning.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There are no findings arising from this report.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- SIRC recommends that CSIS prioritize the development of formal operational policy to guide its overseas human source operations upon receipt of the new Ministerial Direction.
- SIRC recommends that CSIS standardize its risk assessments with detailed and consistent terminology that is reflected in operational policy.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADO	Assistant Director, Operations
DDO	Deputy Director, Operations
DG IR	Director General, International Region
HUMINT	Human Intelligence