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**CSIS SUPPORT TO EMERGING ISSUES AND GOVERNMENT OF
CANADA INTELLIGENCE PRIORITIES**

(SIRC STUDY 2011-06)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 2

2 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE 4

3 KIDNAPPING CASES AND SERVICE INVOLVEMENT 5

 3.3 Issues for Consideration 10

4 CSIS AND MARITIME HUMAN SMUGGLING 13

 4.3 Moving Forward: Future Involvement 15

5 CONCLUSION 17

1 INTRODUCTION

CSIS's intelligence collection efforts are governed by the Government of Canada's intelligence priorities. In recent years, in response to a heightened and changing threat environment, these priorities have included new and emerging security intelligence requirements that have led CSIS to expand its operational activities into non-traditional areas, such as kidnapping and illegal migration cases.

In order to ensure an effective whole-of-government response to the increasing number of Canadians kidnapped abroad, the Government has directed CSIS "to provide intelligence on kidnappings of Canadians abroad, when linked to extremist groups, as required." As a result, a 'new operational niche' has been created within the Service. Similarly, another area of emerging importance is that of illegal migration and human smuggling. A number of terrorist groups use illegal migration networks in support of their objectives. As part of its investigations into those groups and their activities that may pose a threat to Canadian interests, CSIS is working alongside domestic partners to stop human smuggling maritime vessels destined for Canada. A common characteristic in responding to these two emerging threats is the requirement for CSIS to work closely with other Canadian departments and agencies as these issues demand "broader and more interactive cross-government specializations and consultations."¹

This review examined the level and extent of CSIS's support to new and emerging Government of Canada intelligence priorities, specifically kidnapping and illegal migration. It looked at the impact of these new initiatives on "traditional" Service operations and assessed whether CSIS has adequate resources and training to respond to these emerging issues. More broadly, SIRC explored CSIS's contribution to whole of government approaches to emerging security intelligence matters by examining its cooperation and exchanges with domestic partners, as well as foreign allies.

CSIS's interest in politically motivated kidnappings by groups or individuals that pose a threat to Canadian national security is not new.² What is new, however, is the nature and extent of its operational involvement. The same can be said about CSIS's involvement in illegal migration cases. Overall, SIRC found that CSIS's intelligence collection and advice to government on these issues, through its investigations of threats to Canadian national security, was valuable and sound. In particular, SIRC

¹ CSIS Public Report 2008-2009.

found that CSIS's liaison and exchanges with foreign partners proved invaluable to government decision-makers.

At the same time, CSIS has been able to draw operational benefits from participation in these whole-of-government operations. Assisting in kidnapping and illegal migration cases has provided CSIS with unique opportunities to expand in order to address other intelligence requirements, as well as

These opportunities, however, also present their own set of operational challenges. SIRC also remains concerned about the impact which can be a burden on CSIS's financial and human resources. For this reason, SIRC believes that strategic long-term planning to guide CSIS's involvement in these burgeoning issues will be required.

2 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

For this review, SIRC chose two foreign kidnapping incidents

operations ³, as well as two maritime smuggling operations as case studies.

In reviewing CSIS's role in these cases, SIRC was guided by several key questions, such as: What was the nature and extent of the Service's involvement and/or assistance? Did the government provide CSIS with specific direction with respect to its involvement in these activities? Did the Service create new policy specifically in relation to these activities? Does CSIS have adequate resources (human, operational, etc.) to devote to these emerging priorities? Do new business lines require specialized training of Service officers? How is CSIS's role within whole-of-government initiatives generally understood?

The time period of this review was _____ although key developments which occurred outside the period were taken into account.

³ Similar issues were last examined in SIRC Study 2007-04 *CSIS Support for Canadian Operations Abroad*.

3 KIDNAPPING CASES AND SERVICE INVOLVEMENT

As Canadians increasingly travel, live and work abroad, those who venture into failed/failing states or other territories that provide safe havens for terrorist organizations, in particular, face heightened kidnapping risks. Foreign kidnappings typically fall into three main categories: (1) those carried out by extremist or terrorist organizations to achieve political objectives; (2) criminal incidents for which the sole goal is financial gain; or (3) a combination of the first two.⁴

Overall, CSIS contributes to the whole-of-government approach to kidnapping cases in two key ways. First, CSIS collects information on the extremist group and/or

⁶ Briefing with CSIS Branches (June 20, 2011); CSIS IA 2010-11/17 - *Kidnapping as an Islamist Extremist Tactic - Canadian Experience*.

individuals behind a kidnapping using the investigative means at its disposal. As part of this collection effort, human intelligence that CSIS may obtain on the ground can provide unique insight, albeit with challenges associated with foreign operations.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, CSIS may draw on the assistance of its foreign allies working around the world to acquire valuable information. Over the years, CSIS has developed and maintained relationships with numerous foreign intelligence agencies, many of whom have a presence in countries where CSIS does not, and some of whom will only share information with intelligence counterparts (i.e. not law enforcement or foreign affairs officials). Through liaison, CSIS has been able to tap into these resources to gain information it would otherwise not be able to collect itself.

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3.2

3.3 Issues for Consideration

Since its first experience of providing operational assistance in the kidnapping case of the 2005 Christian Peacemakers Team in Iraq, CSIS has been involved in about a dozen politically-motivated foreign kidnappings.³¹ In order to ensure that CSIS is in a position to respond to such incidents, while not compromising its ability to fulfill other responsibilities, SIRC has noted three important challenges: the issue of resource drain, the need to establish internal processes and procedures, and the impact of expanded foreign collection activities.

The first two issues have already been noted by CSIS management. At the DDG Operations Conference, management commented on the significant drain on resources that accompanied CSIS's involvement in kidnapping cases. In the same discussion, there was also recognition of a need to develop standard operating procedures³²

³¹ The vast majority of these incidents occurred during the period covered by this review. Briefing with CSIS Branches (September 26, 2011).

³² Minutes from DDG Operations Conference.

In briefings with CSIS officials, SIRC was told that the Service's approach to dealing with kidnappings continues to be on a risk management basis, so as to allow greater flexibility from a resource and operational standpoint.³⁵ Although each kidnapping case is unique, SIRC questions the desirability of continuing to rely on an ad hoc approach,

Although CSIS has addressed certain logistical challenges, there is little evidence that the Service has taken broader steps to develop standard operational procedures and strategies on its responses to such crises.³⁶ **SIRC believes that the Service's approach to kidnapping cases should be the focus of broader strategic planning. In order to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of CSIS's involvement in such events, SIRC recommends that CSIS develop appropriate operational procedures, as well as mechanisms for the creation of operational and subject matter expertise.**

SIRC believes that its review highlighted the continued value-for-money in liaison work with foreign partners. **Accordingly, although expanding CSIS's presence and operational activity abroad may be**

³⁵ Briefing with CSIS Branches

(September 26, 2011).

deemed an appropriate response to countering threats to Canadian national security, SIRC questions the feasibility of continuing to do so in difficult parts of the world, without additional resources.³⁷ For this reason, as CSIS continues to respond to emerging issues within a whole-of-government framework, more strategic thinking and planning will be required.

³⁷ Refer to Director's Opening Remarks at House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, May 11, 2010.

4 CSIS AND MARITIME HUMAN SMUGGLING

The vast majority of persons smuggled into Canada are of obvious concern to immigration officials. Yet, migrant smuggling may also have multifarious adverse impacts on broader Canadian interests because, like kidnapping, such incidents can be criminal in nature and/or have elements which involve terrorist organizations.³⁸ Canada is not immune to the issue of illegal migration,

The Service has been involved in illegal migration cases through its security screening role under ss.14 and 15 of the *CSIS Act*. In recent years, however, CSIS has sought to enhance its operational capacity on this issue as migrant smuggling has become a government security priority. In October 2010, the Prime Minister appointed a Special Advisor on Human Smuggling and Illegal Migration (former CSIS Director Ward Elcock), whose mandate is to coordinate a whole-of-government response to these issues, as well as to provide advice and recommendations to Ministers and the National Security Advisor.⁴⁰

CSIS is not the lead in such initiatives, its role being limited to providing information related to national security threats.

The key end goal is to collect intelligence that could be exploited by domestic and foreign partners either to influence or disrupt illegal migration activities "in-theatre".

³⁸ DDO Directive - 2010 08 26. Subject: Illegal Migration and Threats to the Security of Canada.

⁴⁰ In parallel, the government established a standing Joint Intelligence Group (JIG) headed by the RCMP.

4.1

In an effort to gain a fuller picture of this threat emanating from overseas, CSIS decided to seek support from foreign partners and building its liaison efforts.

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4.3 Moving Forward: Future Involvement

CSIS launched some strategic initiatives to address this emerging threat. To bolster its operational capabilities, the DDO introduced a Directional Statement on Illegal Migration,

In the cases reviewed, SIRC noted that information CSIS collects through its domestic investigations is key to its role in illegal migration cases.

Given that the government has made migrant smuggling a security priority,
SIRC expects an
increase in CSIS's operational involvement in illegal migration cases.

To avoid
putting a burden on other traditional operational activities, both domestically and
abroad, CSIS will need to approach illegal migration on a priority basis, keeping in mind
their ongoing involvement and commitment.

5 CONCLUSION

As CSIS moves forward to fulfill new and expanded intelligence requirements put forth by the government, it will need to reflect on its strategies - both domestic and foreign - for meeting this demand. SIRC's review shows that new and emerging national security issues require an effective whole-of-government approach, in which CSIS plays an important role.

Key to this role is CSIS's unique access to the international intelligence community. SIRC found that CSIS's liaison and exchanges with foreign partners proved its greatest asset in kidnapping and illegal migration cases.

SIRC concludes that responding to certain new and emerging government intelligence requirements may demand a greater balance between leveraging liaison opportunities and an operational role abroad.

CSIS will need to undertake greater strategic thinking and long-term planning to ensure that it is, and remains, well-positioned to strike this balance and meet additional requirements with available resources.