

TOP SECRET

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**CSIS'S EVOLVING FOOTPRINT ABROAD
(SIRC STUDY 2012-08)**

Security Intelligence Review Committee

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1 INTRODUCTION

This review examined some of the processes that guide CSIS in the operational decision-making surrounding the deployment of its resources abroad in light of the challenges and pressures. The study was guided by some of the following key items: the criteria for opening and closing stations; assessments of arrangements with foreign agencies;

Overall, SIRC found that CSIS is carrying out a thorough strategic exercise in attempting to broaden its expanded operational role overseas. Nonetheless, SIRC outlines a few noteworthy issues concerning: the accuracy of information provided in some of its foreign arrangement profiles; how priorities are determined when collecting on specific intelligence requirements abroad; and the implications surrounding the long term sustainability of playing a more operational versus a liaison-centric role.

2 METHODOLOGY

Although it was not necessary for SIRC to visit a foreign post in order to complete this review, the details included in this study constitute SIRC's annual foreign post review. SIRC requested a list of all stations that were opened and closed over the past five years. From this list, SIRC selected two stations, in order to carry out more in-depth review and analysis. More specifically, SIRC examined information exchanges with partner agencies, foreign collection activities and operational reporting done through these two stations.

In addition to an examination of pertinent documents an in-depth briefing was held with representatives at HQ, including the units and branches that were in direct contact with the stations reviewed. Responses to specific questions asked by SIRC were also provided.

The core review period for this study was from January 2008 to December 2012. Other documentation and relevant issues falling outside of the core review period were also examined in order to provide a more complete picture.

3 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

4 EVOLUTION OF FOOTPRINT ABROAD

4.1 Adaptability and Flexibility

Such changes and demands have not been met without some challenges.

Whether CSIS is being asked to do more with less is a broader question that cannot be answered within this review. Regardless, in order to meet Government of Canada's intelligence expectations, CSIS's footprint abroad has had no choice but to evolve, though fiscal constraints have encouraged a more dynamic approach to this evolution.

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The Service has s. 17 arrangements '

An additional challenge for CSIS, both in terms of liaison and conducting operations is corruption. According to the Arrangement Profile, one of the primary reasons the Arrangement had been put previously into the dormant category was corruption.⁴⁶ It appears corruption is still a concern, and is indeed noted

the Service re-engaging current corruption concerns.

SIRC found that prior to CSIS took appropriate steps to assess

4.2 Section 17 Implications

Greater operational presence abroad has also meant a changing dynamic of how CSIS is dealing with foreign intelligence agencies. This has translated into the enhancement of existing arrangements, the re-activation of suspended or dormant relationships, and the pursuit of new partnerships. The requirement to work and deal with a limited pool of potentially problematic partners in certain parts of the world is inevitable; this reality is nonetheless juxtaposed with reasonable questioning and research on the questionable track record of some of these agencies and its personnel.

Establishing CSIS foreign arrangements is governed by section 17(1) (b) of the *CSIS Act*, the Ministerial Directive on Foreign Arrangements and internal policies. New arrangements must be approved by the Minister of Public Safety after consultation with the Minister of DFAIT. When the Minister of Public Safety authorizes a new foreign arrangement, he or she may impose a caveat requiring that CSIS seek ministerial approval to renew the arrangement in a given period of time. In order to renew the arrangement, CSIS must include an updated assessment of their relationship with the foreign partner and the rationale as to the benefit of engaging with the foreign partner. Arrangements may also be put into the dormant category after a year of inactivity or be suspended/restricted. Suspensions or restrictions are often due to concerns about human rights issues or third party rule violations.

Information related to s. 17 arrangements is contained in the Section 17 Arrangement Profile,

These Arrangement Profiles are used to brief the Director, Executive, branches and the regions, as well as external departments, including SIRC. CSIS itself notes that it is "of utmost importance that these Arrangement Profiles be updated and be accurate on a continual basis".⁵¹

SIRC found the three Arrangement Profiles that it examined

– had some deficiencies regarding content.

SIRC also found that in at least one case, critical information contained in a source file was not used to keep the Arrangement Profile accurate and up-to-date.

However, as stated above these profiles that are used to brief the Director, the Executive, and other government of Canada departments, and it is SIRC's expectation that they be an accurate reflection of any Service concerns as well as a true reflection of CSIS's relationship with the agencies themselves.

SIRC has commented in the past on the accuracy and maintenance of s. 17 profiles⁵⁷. **SIRC found that although there has been improvement with regards to regular updates, there is still a need for significant improvements, particularly in regards to populating the content of the documents.** As overseas operations expand and evolve, the accuracy of information contained within s.17 profile arrangements becomes more important than ever. As such, **SIRC recommends that CSIS take immediate action to ensure that s.17 profiles are consistently accurate, complete, up-to-date and relevant.**

5 CONCLUSION

Overall, the Service is maintaining the flexibility required to respond to an ever-changing threat abroad.

SIRC found that the CSIS's footprint abroad is evolving rather than merely expanding.

As CSIS becomes more operational abroad the Service needs to ensure that their Arrangement Profiles accurately reflect the true nature of the relationship. As operations abroad are now the norm, accurate and up-to-date information on foreign agencies is crucial not only to the success of the operation, but also to maintaining positive liaison relationships.

This review has provided a general overview of how CSIS's role abroad is adapting and evolving; and as it continues to do so, SIRC will be interested in a host of other relevant items.

Summary of Findings

SIRC found that prior to the Service re-engaging appropriate steps to assess current corruption concerns.

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had some deficiencies regarding content.

SIRC also found that in at least one case, critical information contained in a source file was not used to keep the Arrangement Profile accurate and up-to-date.

SIRC found that although there has been improvement with regards to regular updates, there is still a need for significant improvements, particularly in regards to populating the content of the documents.

Summary of Recommendations

SIRC recommends that CSIS take immediate action to ensure that s.17 profiles are consistently accurate, complete, up-to-date and relevant.