

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

TOP SECRET / CEO

SIRC REVIEW 2014-02

REVIEW OF CSIS'S FOREIGN-BASED HUMAN SOURCES

SUMMARY

- The purpose of this study was to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Service's Human Source Program and to develop an understanding of the contribution that this program has made to the Service's overall intelligence collection and production.
- Overall, SIRC found that the Service's accountability framework in the area of human source management was sound, and SIRC concurred with the Service's decision to develop a series of policies and procedures that applied to all human sources regardless of location.
- SIRC found that the Service's case management activities were, on the whole, reasonable and necessary.
- SIRC found that the information collected pertained to specific GoC Intelligence Priorities, the information disseminated in CIRs was consistent with operational reporting and the source of the information was described in a manner consistent with relevant case management documentation and the source's access to the information provided.
- Nevertheless, SIRC did identify some issues of concern. These pertain to the approval process for a particular operation, and the recording of contact between CSIS employees and human sources.

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| 2 | METHODOLOGY | 4 |
| 2.1 | Review Activity and Criteria | 4 |
| 3 | BACKGROUND..... | 6 |
| 4 | SIRC FINDINGS..... | 8 |
| 4.1 | Accountability Framework..... | 8 |
| 4.2 | Case Management..... | 8 |
| | | 9 |
| | | 11 |
| | 4.2.3 Recording of Contacts with CSIS Human Sources..... | 12 |
| 4.3 | Information Management | 13 |
| | | 13 |
| | | 14 |
| 5 | CONCLUSION..... | 15 |

ATIP version

NOV 28 2018

dated: _____

1 INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service's (CSIS or the Service) operations abroad have become an integral part of its activities, and the recruitment and development of foreign-based human sources is at the leading edge of this work. These individuals have little or no connection to Canada, but they are nevertheless tasked, managed and paid by CSIS. In addition, although they are covered by the same policy framework as domestic-based human sources, the management of human sources in a foreign environment is more complex.

Accordingly, CSIS handlers and sources alike face a myriad of challenges that are unique to the foreign environment.

The purpose of this study was to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Service's Human Source Program and to develop an understanding of the contribution that this program has made to the Service's overall intelligence collection and production. To this end, SIRC examined the accountability and policy frameworks in place to guide the management of these sources. In addition, SIRC reviewed a sample of foreign-based human sources to assess the Service's case and information management. This involved an examination of the Service's use of validation techniques, risk assessment and compensation as well as the collection, reporting and dissemination of information obtained from the sources in the review sample.

Overall, SIRC found that the Service's accountability framework in this area was sound. Service policies and procedures provide employees with clear guidance and establish processes that SIRC believes support CSIS in fulfilling its obligations under the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act (CSIS Act)*, complying with relevant Ministerial Direction and meeting the Intelligence Priorities of the Government of Canada (GoC).

Nevertheless, SIRC did identify some issues of concern. These pertain to the approval process for a particular operation,
and the recording of contact between CSIS employees and human sources.

ATIP version

dated: NOV 28 2018

2 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to assess the Service's case and information management within the context of its Foreign-Based Human Sources Program. SIRC reviewed all corporate and operational documentation related to a sample of foreign-based human sources. To ensure that the review sample was representative of the overall program, SIRC chose sources on the basis of their locations, responsible branch, type of tasking and whether they had participated in Joint Operations or Operational Assistance.

The core review period for this study was from Jan 1, 2012 to Dec 31, 2013, but to make a complete assessment of this subject, SIRC requested some information that was outside this period.

2.1 Review Activity and Criteria

Administrative Files

Financial Files

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FOREIGN-BASED HUMAN SOURCES

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Operational Reporting

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3 BACKGROUND

The Service's operations abroad have evolved considerably in recent years.

ATIP version

NOV 28 2018

dated: _____

Recognizing that the fundamental principles of source management, and indeed those enshrined in the *CSIS Act* and MD, apply to all Service human sources regardless of location, the Service undertook a major revision of human source policies. The result of this revision CSIS amalgamated its two series of human source policies into a single one; policy on human sources now applies to all human sources whether they are foreign or domestic. The revised series of policy identifies the fundamental principles that guide the Service's conduct of human source operations both in Canada and abroad. Equally important, it outlines the structure and organization of the Human Source Program and defines the roles and responsibilities of the various operational stakeholders involved in human source operations.

ATIP version

dated: NOV 28 2018

4 SIRC FINDINGS

4.1 Accountability Framework

SIRC examined the policies and procedures that apply to the management of the Service's Human Source Program and their application in the context of different operations. **Overall, SIRC found that the Service's accountability framework in the area of human source management was sound, and SIRC concurred with the Service's decision to develop a series of policies and procedures that applied to all human sources regardless of location.** In SIRC's view, these policies and procedures provide employees with clear guidance and establish processes that SIRC believes support CSIS in fulfilling its obligations under the *CSIS Act*, complying with relevant Ministerial Direction and meeting the Intelligence Priorities of the GoC.

More specifically, SIRC determined that the Service's accountability framework in this area helped to ensure that the information provided by foreign-based human sources pertained to threat-related activity as per section 2 of the *CSIS Act* and was necessary to advance investigations into Intelligence Priorities established by the GoC. SIRC also found the use of human sources was reasonable given the circumstances and proportional to the gravity and imminence of the threat. Finally, SIRC found that Service policies and procedures helped to ensure that issues and/or circumstances that may be of interest to the Minister, as per the 2008 MD on operations, were brought to the attention of management and given due consideration.

4.2 Case Management

Case management relies on the expertise of various stakeholders to guide and support the collection, validation and risk assessment that is crucial to the overall management of human source operations.

On this issue, SIRC found that the Service had recently implemented a new initiative to increase the use of validation techniques for both foreign and domestic human sources. Furthermore, SIRC found that the Service had clear definitions as well as qualitative and quantitative criteria that helped to ensure a source's relationship with the Service and reporting history was accurately and consistently described throughout CSIS records. Finally, review of source operations revealed that, despite

ATIP version

NOV 28 2018

dated: _____

the challenges associated with overseas operations, the Service made use of the validation tools available to it throughout its relationship with the source and, in particular, in the event that circumstances brought the source's credibility into question.

With respect to the other elements of case management, SIRC found that the Service's activities were, on the whole, reasonable and necessary. Nevertheless, SIRC did identify one instance where it believes the Service should have conducted a more comprehensive evaluation of the risk associated with the proposed operational activity. In addition,

as well as the Service's process for recording contact between CSIS employees and human sources. These issues are described in greater detail in the following sections.

ATIP version

dated: NOV 28 2018

During the review, SIRC identified an issue with respect to the approval process for an operation involving a human source.

On the basis of the risks identified by the Service, SIRC is of the opinion that this operation posed a risk to life and, therefore, should have been subject to the risk assessment process required

Ultimately, SIRC concurred with the Service's rationale for conducting this operational activity.

This would

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dated: NOV 28 2018

have involved a more detailed evaluation of all the risks associated with the operation, particularly with respect to the risk to the source's personal safety.

ATIP version

NOV 20 2018

dated: _____

4.2.3 Recording of Contacts with CSIS Human Sources

ATIP version

dated: NOV 26 2018

4.3 Information Management

SIRC's review also included an examination of the Service's management of information. This involved a review of the collection, analysis, retention and dissemination of information obtained from the foreign-based human sources in the review sample.

With only a few exceptions, described in greater detail in the next section, **SIRC found that the information collected pertained to specific GoC Intelligence Priorities, the information disseminated was consistent with operational reporting and the source of the information was described in a manner consistent with relevant case management documentation and the source's access to the information provided.**

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ATIP version

dated: NOV 28 2018

5 CONCLUSION

Overall, SIRC found that the Service's accountability framework in this area was sound. Service policies and procedures provide employees with clear guidance and establish processes that SIRC believes support CSIS in fulfilling its obligations under the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act (CSIS Act)*, complying with relevant Ministerial Direction and meeting the Intelligence Priorities of the Government of Canada (GoC). Nevertheless, SIRC did identify some issues of concern. These pertain to the approval process for a particular operation and the recording of contact between CSIS employees and human sources.

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