Sacrificing Lives to Protect America’s Secrets

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List of Terms

**Intelligence Community** -- Air Force Intelligence, Army Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Coast Guard Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Marine Corps Intelligence, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, National Security Agency, and Navy Intelligence.

**Intelligence Disciplines** – All Source/Fusion Intelligence, HUMINT - Human Intelligence, GEOINT/IMINT - gathered from satellite, MASINT - Measurement and Signature Intelligence, OSINT - Open Source Intelligence, STRATINT - Strategic Intelligence, SIGINT - Signals Intelligence, CI – Counter Intelligence, and TECHINT - Technical Intelligence.

**Second Party Partners** – Special and close ties in intelligence gathering and sharing with Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and United States that is closely associated with the National Security Agency and SIGINT services of the second party alliance.

**Third Party Partners** – Includes most NATO countries and close allies throughout the world. Limited sharing of intelligence sources and methods
Outline

Thesis: I believe the IC has a limited responsibility to assist other countries when that assistance jeopardizes an American foreign intelligence source that may save the lives of American citizens.

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Abstract

This paper addresses the ethical dilemma facing many professionals working within the U.S. Intelligence Community regarding the safety and wellbeing of citizens from cordial to hostile nations versus the safety of our citizens and close allies. The paper explores the cost of intelligence operations, priorities, relations with other governments, and the moral dilemma facing the ordinary analysts and decision makers. One must not forget that the intelligence professionals are ordinary people with Families and an appreciation for life. Sometimes it is difficult for them to see or appreciate the repercussions of affecting international affairs when lives are threatened. In the end, I hope this paper addressing all sides of the issue and the reason for my position.
Introduction

Discovering, recruiting, developing, and exploiting sources of data for use as foreign intelligence takes years to fully mature and costs the American taxpayer a tremendous amount of money. Think about the commitment that it takes to design, build, and launch imagery or communications collection satellites into orbit. Years of coordination and construction, costing of several hundred million dollars for each, go into the launch of every spy satellite. Imagine the tedious nature of making inroads with foreign VIPs in the slight hope that they would assist the United States by providing valuable information about their own country. The very nature of these relations takes years to cultivate and grow into valuable intelligence sources. The mission of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) is to protect American citizens and interests worldwide. So, does the IC have a moral or otherwise obligation to share verifiable, actionable intelligence with foreign countries when that intelligence can save lives, but will result in the loss of the intelligence source for America? I believe the IC has a limited responsibility to assist other countries when that assistance jeopardizes an American foreign intelligence source that may save the lives of American citizens.

American Citizens are First Priority

In 2002, I had the privilege of briefing President Bush on the counter-terrorism Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) effort when he visited the National Security Agency, Ft. Meade, Maryland. After he received our briefing, President Bush commented that the IC would place American lives at the highest priority, regardless if we lose sources or compromise techniques and methods to obtain intelligence. President Bush made it perfectly clear. The IC will not sacrifice American lives just to save a source. We would deal with reestablishing the source
through other means later. I fully agree with President Bush. Our highest commitment is to protect the American public from all harm, regardless to the sacrifice of the military or IC.

Second Party Partners

Now, let us take it another step when we include the citizens of other countries. The United States and the IC have special agreements and relationships with nearly every nation of the world. These relationships range from strong, friendly partnerships to hostile exchanges of rhetoric, which often culminates to armed engagements. Our government, IC, and military have a special and close bond with our second party partners: Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Within this relationship, we share most of our most guarded and technologically sophisticated secrets, and they share their findings with us. Because of this special relationship and the commonality of our core values and view of the world, I also wholeheartedly agree with sharing intelligence, especially if it could save lives of our second party partners at the cost of losing a source. Each second party partner benefits from this agreement, mutual respect, and common goal to protect our peoples. In the end, we are stronger together than acting individually.

Third Party and Similar Partners

The question becomes complicated as we move from American and second party partner citizens. The U.S. military works closely with our third party partners, which include mostly the other nations of NATO as well as our Pacific Command allies. However, our national and tactical intelligence assets, methods, and sources remain closely guarded and sanitized to prevent disclosing these sources and methods from these governments. Over the years, bonds of trust and friendship have fluctuated with many of these nations. Moreover, many of these countries have targeted the United States government for intelligence collection, and many of their leaders
have formed other alliances or developed relationships with nations the United States have deemed hostile to our interests. Until recently, France has actively engaged in financial and trade relationships with many suspect terrorist states throughout the world. Turkey and Greece, both NATO members, have maintained a strained relationship for decades. Plus, news reports over the last few days have indicate that Turkey may launch military action in northern Iraq in order to destroy Kurdish rebels and their terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party. These small examples visibly demonstrate the extreme caution the IC must exercise when sharing intelligence. We cannot expect these nations to safeguard our secrets and to protect our sources when it does not serve their domestic agenda. I believe the threat exists that these countries may leverage American assets in order to promote their national interests and foreign policy. Accordingly, I would argue that the risk of revealing our intelligence assets comes at too high of a cost, especially if the price may cost the safety and security of protecting our citizens and promoting our national interests.

Hostile Nations

The next step includes the remaining nations of the world who are on a less than friendly relationship with the United States. At what cost should the IC and military share actionable intelligence with nations who are openly belligerent against the United States? Should we be willing to risk losing an ability to protect the lives of our citizens in order to save the lives of citizens whose governments are self-serving and act aggressively against the United States? One can easily surmise that we would automatically withhold potentially lifesaving intelligence out of spite. I do not believe this belief is the case with intelligence professionals. It always comes back to trust in the foreign government and the potential loss of IC capabilities and the impact it has to future attacks against the United States. Experience has shown that many of these hostile
nations do not value human life as deeply as the United States. Similarly, many believe their foundation for national sovereignty rests upon the concept of the citizenry existing to serve the state. With this twisted and conflicting notion of human value within these countries, I do not believe the United States and the IC are morally obligated to divulge assets that may save them from international or domestic attacks.

Moral Dilemma

What is the morally right thing to do? We are a nation based on the foundation of Judeo-Christian principles that value all human life. Our nation spends a tremendous amount of money each year on medical research and treatment to save lives. Moreover, we are a generous nation. Whenever and wherever a natural disaster takes place, the American public has been quick and generous in donating emergency assistance. Our government and military are no exception. We have responded quickly with overwhelming support when earthquakes destroyed much of Iran in 1990 and 2003, supplied food to the starving people in North Korean and Somalia, and assisted survivors of the 2004 tsunami. Contrary to popular myth, however, the United States government and military cannot save the world. Unfortunately, we need to decide systematically and intelligently those causes to support with direct involvement and those causes that we simply cannot support. For example, the United States has limited direct capabilities to halt the mass killings of Rwandans. Short of a direct invasion of Rwanda, the United States has few resources and capabilities to squash the killings. Even our intelligence capabilities have limitations in certain parts of the world. Simply put, the IC cannot watch every one, all of the time, everywhere in the world. A prioritized list of intelligence requirements based upon immediate and anticipated threats govern what we gather, monitor, and act upon to satisfy those needs. Essentially, we must use a matrix and apply a cost benefit analysis to determine whether the risk
of losing assets, thereby placing American citizens at risk, outweighs the benefit of assisting friendly and unfriendly nations.

Repercussions

Again, I maintain that our nation and military cannot risk the consequences of losing an intelligence source to warn third party and unfriendly nations of impending attacks. We must be willing and remain steadfast that our citizens and interests far outweigh the temporary diplomatic victory the United States might enjoy by providing actionable intelligence to other countries. In the 1980s, the United States gave intelligence to Afghanistan and Iraq in their wars with the Soviet Union and Iran respectively. Years later, the Afghan warlords and Iraqi military were able to manipulate, modify, and expand this assistance against our country. In 1967, Israeli Defense Forces attacked the United States Navy Spy Ship Liberty, who was monitoring and assisting Israel during the Six Day War. These few examples clearly illustrate the importance safeguarding our secrets and capabilities from those who would without hesitation, use it against us.

Limited Compromise

I am open to the possibility of sharing intelligence products to friendly and estranged nations provided that we can, with absolute certainty, protect the source. The IC refers to this process by several names: Plausible cover, plausible deniability, declassifying, classified collateral dissemination, and restricted dissemination. Essentially, the IC attempts to make available threat warnings without revealing the source, as long as the product recipient cannot identify the means in which the IC produced the product. This dissemination protocol has worked well as the United States continues to align itself with nations in the Global War on Terrorism and actions in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. In the end, however, the IC and
military must painstakingly ensure that sources remained classified and share our most guarded
secrets only with our second party partners.

Conclusion

The United States IC and military has the moral duty to protect the citizens of the United
States, even at the cost of the lives of other nations. I have concluded that safeguarding
intelligence sources in order to save American lives is the painful realization of the world in
which we live. The IC and military need to take all precautions necessary to ensure that
American citizens remain safe, even at the cost of foreign lives. There are nation states and
terrorist organizations that would revel in the demise of the United States. Consequently, we
must make a choice, and the choice is clear. The life of one American is worth more than the
lives of a 1000 citizens of another country. To that end, we must use the resources of the IC and
military to protect our people.