

TOP SECRET

**File No.: 2800-168
(TD R520)**

**CSIS INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION
(SIRC STUDY 2011-09)**

**Security Intelligence Review Committee
June 6, 2012**

ATIP version

dated: MAR 14 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION

CSIS has built much of its reputation on HUMINT collection; however, it also serves another business line: intelligence production and dissemination, which historically has taken a "back seat" to its operational duties.¹ In recent years, CSIS has attempted to address this limitation by granting the Intelligence Assessments Branch (IAB) – the analytical and dissemination arm of CSIS – a more significant role.² Since 2008, the main goal for IAB has been to "enhance relevance to Government"³ by attempting to bridge the gap between collection and production. As a result, this has led to new methods and mechanisms to deal with how intelligence demands are heard, processed, analyzed and disseminated, placing IAB at "the centre of the Service's intelligence process."⁴

This review focused on CSIS's intelligence production and dissemination processes through an in-depth examination of IAB. More specifically, SIRC examined: how IAB has sought to work more closely with CSIS operations, and to integrate Government of Canada (GoC) intelligence priorities into CSIS's collection efforts; how it has changed its feedback mechanism; initiatives IAB has undertaken to provide more timely and analytically rigorous intelligence assessments; the drivers and demand for different CSIS intelligence products; and, some elements of training offered to analysts.

IAB's new position has streamlined the dissemination of CSIS products to clients and has also allowed for greater client input into CSIS's collection and reporting processes. SIRC found that these new processes have generally resulted in more useful collection and provision of intelligence to a wider clientele. However, we also noted some challenges and issues for consideration. In particular, the increased emphasis on production and dissemination may require CSIS to implement additional checks and balances similar to those imposed for collection. Current tracking mechanisms also appear to be skewing the collection ratio in regard to security versus foreign intelligence. In addition, the demands

¹ CSIS Document, "Intelligence Management Pilot Project," June 3, 2009.

² The analysis of intelligence within CSIS is handled, in large part, by the Intelligence Assessments Branch (IAB). The IAB plays an instrumental role in assisting CSIS in responding effectively to the Government's intelligence requirements, and ensuring that timely and relevant intelligence reaches CSIS's domestic and foreign partners. In 2007, SIRC reviewed the then newly created IAB and found there was significant pressure on the Branch. SIRC pointed to future challenges in continuing to develop IAB's capacity to meet mounting demands for intelligence. In 2009, SIRC also conducted a baseline review of how CSIS identifies and addresses intelligence priorities - a process which is now under the auspice of the IAB.

³ Intelligence Assessment Branch 2010-2011 Program Objectives.

⁴ Intelligence Assessment Branch Annual Plan 2008-2009 - Director General's Overview.

of GoC and some clients may be pushing the Service toward a more expanded role at the expense of security intelligence.

2 METHODOLOGY

This review examined a cross-section of documentation on the structure, role, functioning, best practices and management of the Intelligence Assessments Branch. SIRC also assessed client feedback and examined IAB's new structure and products. To complement its documentation review, SIRC staff held a number of briefings with IAB management and analysts. The Acting DG of IAB provided an extensive overview of the Branch and subsequent meetings were held with Strategic Analysts, Tactical Analysts, and Requirements Officers, who each provided perspectives on their day-to-day activities. In order to clarify specific items, additional questions were also submitted to IAB.

SIRC also solicited input from some of CSIS's most important domestic partners and clients. Although it is not common practice to seek external perspectives on CSIS activities, given the issue and topic under review, SIRC felt this would provide added value. The questions were geared for senior level executives tasked with intelligence matters.⁵

The review's time frame spanned from January 2008 to June 2011; however, some documentation outside of this review period was examined in order to provide a more complete picture.

⁵ SIRC requested input from the following departments and agencies: Public Safety Canada, Transport Canada, Canadian International Development Agency, Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, National Defence, Communications Security Establishment Canada, Privy Council Office, Justice Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Border Services Agency, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

3 STRUCTURE OF INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS BRANCH

In order to fulfill the demands of its new central role, IAB has undergone significant structural and organizational changes with the goal of making improvements to its core business functions. These core duties are for the most part performed by Strategic Analysts (SA); Requirements Officers (RO) and Tactical Analysts (TA)

With respect to improvements, the Branch has committed itself to the following key activities: an enhanced intelligence requirements process; assistance on operations and case management through better communications with regions and desks; and, better liaison with external clients.⁷

Strategic Analysts

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Requirements Officers

⁷ SIRC Briefing with IAB (January 12, 2012).

⁸ The Service's SAs regularly liaise and meet with IOs in regions.

⁹ More on Intelligence Assessments and other CSIS products will be discussed in a later section of this review.

¹⁰ Responses from IAB to SIRC: Follow-up Questions for IAB.

Tactical Analysts

3.1 Challenges and Opportunities of New Structure

SIRC recognizes that the structural changes implemented within IAB are creating opportunities for improved analysis, production and dissemination. Nonetheless, each stream still faces a number of challenges that have been internally acknowledged.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the new structure appears to be meeting IAB's goals of assisting operations and case management through better communications with

regions and desks, and better liaison with external clients.

The three streams that IAB has shaped and re-shaped over the last five years are having broader impacts on how CSIS is delivering on its mandated obligations. The new structure and operations have helped to bring more attention to, and enhance, intelligence analysis and production. However, as SIRC's review later notes, maintaining a balance between enhancing relevance to GoC and managing growing client demands for both foreign and security intelligence is a difficult task. Our study will now turn to a discussion on what drives collection and how this information is turned into intelligence products.

4 DISSEMINATION

4.1 Intelligence Requirements

In conjunction with its new structure, IAB has created the Intelligence Requirements Document (IRD) intended to drive both collection and production. It is produced at the start of each fiscal year, but is updated on an ad hoc basis when short-term events create the need for limited and specific intelligence collection.²⁰

The IRD acts as a framework to organise GoC intelligence priorities, Ministerial Direction, Section 16 agreements, and input from clients.²¹

²⁰ The GoC, annually updates and identifies priorities for the intelligence community. Each department or agency in the community is then provided with Ministerial Direction based on their mandate. For CSIS, this direction comes from the Minister of Public Safety.

²¹ Memo from ER&L March 9, 2012 Subject: SIRC Study 2011-09: Questions for IAB on IRD and Additional Information.

Once signed off by the Executive, the final document is distributed throughout CSIS and to the GoC departments.²⁶ In addition, several Branches within the Service develop their own directional statements which refine the IRD to the specific resources and operational relevance of that Branch. This is not a CSIS-wide practice at present, but IAB has recommended that all Operational Branches follow-up the IRDs with appropriate directional statements.²⁷ SIRC shares IAB's view and encourages all operational branches and regions to develop directional statements as standard practice.

4.2 Products and Process

In addition to the IRD, IAB produces the vast majority of CSIS's intelligence products, which it then disseminates to domestic and foreign partners, as it deems appropriate.²⁸ On an average yearly basis, IAB produces approximately Intelligence Assessments (IAs), CSIS Intelligence Reports (CIRs), and Threat and Risk Assessments (TRAs).²⁹ It is also responsible for disseminating Foreign Agency Reports (FARs), which are intelligence assessments and products from allies and other governments.³⁰

As previously noted, IAs, which are CSIS's "flagship" product written by SAs, provide the GoC with broad, strategic analysis. They do not always contain CSIS-collected information and are generally, but not always, focussed on issues of Canadian national security.

²⁶ Memo from ER&L March 9, 2012 Subject: SIRC Study 2011-09: Questions for IAB on IRD and Additional Information.

²⁷ SIRC Briefing with IAB (January 12, 2012).

²⁸ In the case of CIRs, the distribution list is made in consultation with the relevant operational desk(s).

²⁹ IAB Successes & Accomplishments in 2010/2011, (April 14, 2011); SIRC Briefing IAB (January 12, 2012). TRAs are produced at the request of a GoC department to assess the national security threats to a specific asset.

These reports do not address "consequence nor recommend mitigation, that is left to the asset holder." In general, TRAs assess threat and not risk.

³⁰ SIRC Briefing with IAB (January 12, 2012).

CIRs are widely distributed throughout GoC departments, many of whom find this to be the most useful of CSIS's products, as well as allies in the Five Eyes and beyond. SIRC solicited input from several of the Service's clients and found that CSIS products dealing with national security issues and the "domestic threat picture," particularly CIRs, were indeed valued.³²

New record keeping protocols have been established in order to track production of CIRs and, more importantly, the intelligence requirements to which they respond. Matrices were developed to track the input, basic content, collection authority, dissemination, and feedback of each report.

4.3 Cultural Shift

In the course of its review, SIRC saw evidence of CSIS being in the midst of a "cultural shift" that is driven by a combination of three key factors: first, the influence of CSIS's close foreign partners; second, GoC expectations and priorities; and third, client feedback and demands.

Many of the changes that have taken place as IAB has moved to the centre of the Service's intelligence cycle were modelled after the *foreign*

³² Based on responses from SIRC questions to Intelligence Community.

³³ CSIS Document: "Risk Register Document 23 May 2011".

intelligence organizations.³⁴

The do not make distinctions between security intelligence (SI) and foreign intelligence (FI); they simply collect "intelligence". For CSIS, however, the distinction between SI and FI is a vital part of its mandate. In emulating foreign intelligence agencies and their products, CSIS runs the risk of obscuring the distinctions within its collection mandate. This represents not only a cultural shift for production, but also for collection.³⁵ For this reason, as CSIS seeks best practices from allies, it should also turn to other domestic security organizations,

Government expectations and priorities also heavily influence CSIS's collection priorities.

This situation increases the potential to push collection increasingly towards broader GoC *intelligence* priorities, perhaps to the detriment of CSIS's core *security intelligence* mandate.

Finally, in order to serve the needs of CSIS clients who receive and use its various reports, IAB has worked over the past few years to go from a passive client-feedback strategy to an active one, whereby CSIS has actively solicited input from GoC departments.³⁷ A client-driven strategy, while deemed appropriate, also creates the

³⁴ Intelligence Management Pilot Project - 2009-06-03 File #110-95.

³⁵ CSIS Document: "Risk Register Document 23 May 2011".

³⁷ As noted by IAB, this active input is similar to a "what can we do for you" service - SIRC Briefing with IAB (January 12, 2012).

potential for increasing demands, as not all clients seek intelligence that falls within CSIS's purview:

In an effort to try to meet client demands, CSIS runs the risk of collecting and producing intelligence that takes away from its security intelligence focus. Furthermore, SIRC notes that the increased volume of CSIS products is not necessarily a marked measure of success. Clients may provide positive feedback; however, relevance to CSIS's own mandate should be at the heart of its production goals.

The IAB's new centralized role was geared to alleviate certain challenges with respect to growing GoC intelligence priorities and increased client-driven foreign and security intelligence demands, but also to assist with CSIS operations and case management. Although the Branch has made significant strides in how it is able to serve its clients through a better production and dissemination strategy, as well as an improved intelligence requirement process, SIRC notes that expanded intelligence collection and production could lead to challenges in the future.

SIRC is concerned that the combination of CSIS's attempts to emulate the reporting and dissemination structure of FI organizations, its efforts to respond to broader GoC intelligence priorities, and CSIS's more active client feedback process, may take the focus away from its core mandate, *security intelligence*.

5 CONCLUSION

As noted in its 2010/2011 Program Objectives, IAB concluded that over the two previous years it had greatly enhanced one of its key goals, that is enhanced relevance to Government. However, it is this goal that appears to create additional and continued challenges for the Service, particularly in terms of collection, but also production. Too much emphasis on dissemination and production may actually be swinging the pendulum too far, thereby putting too much focus on some clients' needs, and not concentrating enough on what CSIS's specific goals should be – collection and analysis of security intelligence. CSIS is one part of the Canadian intelligence community. In this light, managing GoC expectations should also be part of the centralized role played by IAB.