

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

TOP SECRET / CEO
SIRC REVIEW 2014-01
REVIEW OF A COUNTER-TERRORISM INVESTIGATION:

SUMMARY

- This review undertook a comprehensive assessment of CSIS's investigation into _____ to see how the Service has positioned itself to counter what appears to be an escalating threat.
- _____
- Overall, SIRC found _____ investigation to be run soundly; CSIS's operational activities were reasonable and proportional to the threat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- SIRC recommended that CSIS document the decision-making or rationale for choosing not to follow expert advice in a foreign operation approval as it would be beneficial, both from a case management perspective and from an internal risk-management perspective.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Modern technology has accelerated the speed with which threats develop, and the time between conception and execution of an attack can be very short. One large and evolving CSIS counter-terrorism investigation is that directed against **The threat posed** not only has multiple angles, it appears to be becoming more dangerous.

This review undertook a comprehensive assessment of CSIS's investigation to see how the Service has positioned itself to counter what appears to be an escalating threat. SIRC examined human sources, domestic and foreign exchanges of information, and advice to government. The review's point of departure was the realignment of CSIS's investigation

SIRC identified and examined the challenges associated with this realignment, as well as the accompanying increase in information-sharing and cooperation with foreign partners. The review also looked into the nature of the threat posed by

Overall, SIRC was satisfied with CSIS's operational activities in this investigation. However, the Committee did recommend that CSIS improve its record-keeping on an aspect of decision-making surrounding human sources' activities abroad.

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2 METHODOLOGY

This review examined CSIS's response to the evolving threat. In doing so, SIRC focused its research on the following areas: whether there has been a shift in the threat and how CSIS has positioned itself to counter the threat; CSIS's intelligence and collection requirements against this threat; the nature of CSIS's interactions and exchanges with domestic and foreign partners; and the advice CSIS has provided to government and partners with respect to the threat.

The core review period for this study was 1 January 2012 to 30 December 2013, but SIRC requested some documentation that fell outside this period in order to provide a complete assessment of relevant issues.

2.1 Review Activity and Criteria

SIRC's framework for this review encompassed human sources and information exchanges. SIRC reviewed all relevant operational and corporate documentation to assess these activities through the lenses of authority, necessity, reasonableness, legality, proportionality and internal governance. SIRC also analyzed the overall reasonableness, effectiveness and efficiency of the investigation. Additionally, to ensure the accuracy of information that the Service shared on the threat, SIRC reviewed all of the CSIS Intelligence Reports (CIRs) that were produced from information provided by the source sample.

SIRC had briefings with management and operations in corporate documents and operational reporting related to on investigation and a sample at CSIS HQ and met with SIRC also reviewed focusing primarily human sources.

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3 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation, which dates back to is one of CSIS's larger investigations.

the Service's investigation focused on the fundraising and propaganda activities in Canada

CSIS has turned its investigative focus towards individuals in Canada with connections to

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the information CSIS received from its partners **SIRC found**
to be of value,

This information has proven useful for planning operations as it has helped CSIS

⁵ SIRC Briefing with I&L May 12, 2014

⁶ 2011 Directional Statement HQ/IL/110808/3507/5396

⁷ HQ/IL/121019/3791/5587

⁸ CAPONATA

⁹ HQ/IL/130528/2088/6193;

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**to mitigate some potential risks, thereby enhancing the safety and security of
both sources and handlers.**

SIRC examined all operational exchanges with
period.

during the review

Most of the exchanges were with
requests. SIRC found that the Service showed due caution

also requested and received information

CSIS

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5 OPERATIONS

As part of this review, SIRC examined human source files from Regions -

SIRC found that, in the source files reviewed, CSIS's activities were authorized, necessary and reasonable. However, in the case of one source that is discussed below, the regional desk withheld relevant information from a risk assessment for operation abroad.

More broadly, these cases provided SIRC with greater insight into some of the operational challenges of the investigation from a regional perspective.

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The files that SIRC examined all adhered to the policies and procedures set out by CSIS, but one file stood out in terms of its completeness. While required to consult with experts, but not to record why expert advice was heeded or dismissed, recorded the final decision along with the considerations, consultations and justifications for those decisions.

SIRC attempted to understand why the specific advice of an expert group was not heeded in a decision related to source safety. SIRC was informed that consultation did take place and that a compromise was reached with CLU. **SIRC recommends that in the CSIS procedures a requirement be added to include the justification(s) for the acceptance or dismissal of expert advice acquired through mandatory consultation.**

SIRC believes that documenting the decision-making or rationale for choosing not to follow expert advice would be beneficial, both from a case management perspective and from an internal risk-management perspective.

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One source file from [redacted] also contained an instance of advice [redacted] that was not heeded. SIRC followed up on this in order to determine the rationale behind the decision. [redacted] responded that the regional desk was privy to sensitive operational information that was not shared [redacted] nor included [redacted]

SIRC found that [redacted] undermined the integrity of the risk assessment on this operation by withholding information directly relevant to operational security. The requirement to consult with experts [redacted] ensures that all risks are accounted for and mitigated to the highest possible degree. It is extremely difficult for an expert unit to provide complete and relevant advice [redacted] if that advice is based on incomplete information.

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6 CONCLUSION

Overall, SIRC found the investigation to be run soundly; CSIS's operational activities were reasonable and proportional to the threat. However, SIRC was concerned by one source operation whose risk assessment was undermined when the desk withheld relevant information CSIS's investigation was focused and limited to threats having a nexus to Canada. CSIS is aware of the challenges posed by an organization such as

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