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(U) The SIGINT Philosopher Is Back -- with a New Face!

FROM: [REDACTED] the SIDtoday Editor

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(U//FOUO) Last year *SIDtoday* introduced the SIGINT Philosopher column, penned by [REDACTED]. The column was well received, but unfortunately Mr [REDACTED]'s other work commitments have made it impossible for him to continue writing the column. We thank Mr [REDACTED] for his contributions to *SIDtoday* and wish him well in his career!

(U//FOUO) Today we can announce the *new* SIGINT Philosopher columnist, [REDACTED]. While Mr [REDACTED] does not hold a degree in philosophy, as you'll see, he does have a philosophical approach to things, as well as a sense of humor. So, without further delay, we present Mr [REDACTED] first column:

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**The SIGINT
Philosopher**

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(U) Since I've become the new SIGINT philosopher -- a position whose very existence will undo the good work of generations of parents who wisely begged their children not to major in philosophy because they will starve -- I suppose I should be clear what I mean by the term "philosophy." It is one of those words that can have many different meanings, ranging all the way from Plato to corporate mission statements to any kind of folk wisdom:, e.g.:

Andrew: I can't believe the Ravens blew that game.

Chris: Well, some days, you eat the bear, and some days, the bear eats you.

Andrew: Wow, man. That's deep. You're so philosophical. But to me, philosophy is useful only to the extent it can help you figure out what to do with your life. And since I am the *SIGINT* philosopher, in this column I'll try to talk about questions that are relevant to what we all do at work every day. Call it "applied philosophy with a SIGINT slant" with possible gratuitous insertions of Heidegger just to make me sound smart.

(U) One philosophical SIGINT conundrum that faces many of us SIGINTers is the feeling famously expressed by Herbert Hoover's Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, that "gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail."

(S//REL) While almost everyone would agree this is a hopelessly quixotic sentiment, and one doomed to be ignored by every nation on earth, I was surprised when I began working here to be assigned to a diplomatic target. Somehow, it didn't sit well with me at first that we (the US) would invest big money and effort into eavesdropping on the same people we negotiated with. It was as if with the right hand of our State Department we shook their hand, while with the left hand of the Defense Department we reached into their coat pockets. Surely, I thought, if there were any place in the world that idealism should rule and we should show voluntary restraint in our intelligence work, diplomacy was that place. Terrorists who meant harm to children and puppies were one thing, but civil servants talking about work while schlepping their kids to soccer practice seemed a little too close to home.

(U) Last year, I unwittingly stumbled across what feels to me like a good answer to this question during, of all things, my polygraph examination.

(U) I'm a libertarian by nature. I like to be left alone. Polygraphs to me are a unique kind of torture. Like many

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analysts in SID, I also make them worse for myself by analyzing and obsessing each question to death. Last year, a day before my birthday, I had a really terrible polygraph that I knew I had not passed. I spent a month obsessing over it, wondering how I would find a new job, and launching into long internal diatribes berating a society in which it is no longer possible for me to take my family in a wagon out to the prairie and claim a plot of land by a creek and live in a mud cabin.

(U) One of the many thoughts that continually went through my mind was that if I had to reveal part of my personal life to my employer, I'd really rather reveal *ALL* of it rather than just part of it. Partial revelation, such as the fact that answering question X made my pulse quicken, led to misunderstandings. I found myself wishing that my life would be constantly and completely monitored. It might seem odd that a self-professed libertarian would wish an Orwellian dystopia on himself, but here was my rationale: If people knew a few things about me, I might seem suspicious. But if people knew everything about me, they'd see they had nothing to fear.*

(U) This is the attitude I have brought to SIGINT work since then. If we are going to work on targets that fall short of being technically "enemies" but are rather informative for our policy makers -- and we are -- then even looking at it from the target's perspective, we are honor-bound to do *more* and *better* monitoring rather than less.

(U) For while the US does not truly have godlike powers --we cannot do all things -- we do have extraordinary powers. And we tend to mistrust what we do not understand well. A target that has no ill will to the US, but which is being monitored, needs better and more monitoring, not less. So if we're in for a penny, we need to be in for a pound. From the perspective of the US, obviously it is in our interest to understand a target better. But even for the target (if we, like Stimson, are going to chivalrously concern ourselves for him), it is better to be completely and competently monitored rather than halfheartedly and incompetently so.

(U) I guess if we were a corporation, we could make our mission statement (or "corporate philosophy") this: "building informed decision makers -- so that targets do not suffer our nation's wrath unless they really deserve it -- by exercising deity-like monitoring of the target." Now that's philosophy.

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