



(S//SI) Is NSA Going Deaf? What Is 'Golf Cart Reporting'? -- An Interview With MENA's [REDACTED]

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*(U//FOUO) There's been no shortage of work in the Middle East - North Africa Product Line (S2E) in recent years. SIDtoday talked with the **Deputy Chief of MENA**, [REDACTED], to find out how things look from where he's sitting...*

- (U//FOUO) As a MENA manager, what's the biggest challenge you face right now-- the difficulty of the target? ...managing your resources? ...something else?

(S//SI) The biggest challenge for us is leading a mostly junior work force. We have a lot of unfilled billets at a time when we are surging in more areas than ever before. As a result, we've found it necessary to dramatically change the way we make use of both interns and the military. Traditionally these new people were placed mainly in a training mode and not expected to be highly productive for several years. But now, we automatically ask these new people to tackle very demanding work for us, with our senior analysts acting chiefly as mentors. They are immediately thrown into the fight!

(S//SI) The results have been great -- our production has gone up and the quality of the work is very good. The young people working here are very sharp and they've proven that they can handle tough assignments. We have brand new personnel who have penned several hundred reports in a 6-month period and others going overseas including stints in the war zone. At the same time, the senior personnel have risen to the challenge. Without them and their dedication none of this would have been possible. Remember, the ranks of the senior personnel had been greatly thinned from years of no hiring and early outs.

(U//FOUO) Regarding mentoring, we have a good program in place. A lot of interns want to come back to MENA when they finish their tours, so it's working. It also helps that the mission is exciting and the work they are given is meaningful.

- (U//FOUO) There's been an emphasis in recent years on making the most of our Second and Third Party relationships. Is MENA collaborating more closely with foreign partners now than was the case before?

(S//SI) Definitely. Our work with Second and Third Parties is quite extensive -- a huge benefit for us. Beyond that, NSA also makes full use of the Extended Enterprise in covering the MENA target area. NSA/CSS Georgia has responsibility for most of the force protection mission, Menwith Hill Station is doing SIGINT Development work, 12 [SCS](#) sites support our mission, etc. Here at Fort Meade, MENA concentrates more on reporting for the policy makers and strategic issues. All of the organizations performing the MENA mission demand really top-notch linguists and IA's.

- (U) NSA is hiring a lot of analysts these days. Is MENA getting its share of them?

(TS//SI//REL) Given our personnel shortages, we believe that more new hires need to come to support MENA here and at the Cryptologic Center in Georgia. These are very important billets to fill, as are positions we are looking to establish in England and possibly Germany. MENA's intelligence has shaped history. Major U.S. policy decisions -- like refusing to deal with Yassir Arafat, for example -- were based on our reporting. (MENA had smoking-gun evidence that Arafat was still supporting terrorism.) We've also stopped many terrorist attacks in Iraq and other places and saved untold lives. We were way ahead of the pack in providing tactical intelligence to U.S. negotiators.

(TS//SI//REL) In support of the Middle East peace negotiations we provided support that could

be called **"golf cart reporting."** During the Clinton administration, in support of talks going on at Camp David we were producing near real-time reporting that we would stamp "draft" on and fax it to a CIA liaison officer up in Thurmont, Maryland who in his own golf cart would race across the grounds to give it directly to the President or Secretary of State. Imagine the thrill and the responsibility of providing -- with virtually no oversight -- intelligence going directly to the President! They would read the report and know the other diplomats' stances before they even arrived at the conference room! There were some funny stories of racing and cutting off the golf cart carrying the foreign diplomats (picture NASCAR with Jeff Gordon running neck-to-neck against Dale Jarrett). A finished, more polished report would later be produced for wider distribution. The bottom line is that what we're doing has real-life ramifications -- it's not exaggeration to say that we are shaping history.

- (U) What's the most exciting project for the future that MENA is working on?

(S//SI) It's hard to single out just one, but let me say this... **People claimed that we were going deaf in the face of new communications technologies, but I think just the opposite has happened.** We can now get intelligence from media in ways we never thought possible. GSM, pagers, SMS, Voicemails, signals being routed around the world... these are all opportunities we never had before. How about Geo? The collectors became more aggressive. And more important, the content is way better! Now we're seeing personal messages directly from the sources we want, not second- or third-hand information. We have never had it so good. I think it's the greatest thing that ever happened. At the same time, it comes with a cost. How do you process all of this material?

- (U) If you could make one change at the Agency, what would it be?

(U) I think we need to do a better job of applying "lessons learned." Too often we seem to repeat the same mistakes we made in the past. For anyone who has been here as long as I have, we have seen the same ideas, organizational structures, personnel initiatives and strategic plans surface over and over.

- (U) What was the most memorable experience you've had during your career?

(S//SI) This is a hard one in that on a personal level I have a lot of memorable experiences and not-so-memorable experiences, such as being called back to work while fishing in Ocean City and even once sitting in a tree stand hunting in Garrett County, Maryland. While in MENA I have witnessed or been part of countless success stories, but the fact is that none of them would have come to pass without the hard work done by a large number of people ranging from the developers, engineers and collectors who get things rolling and then the language and intelligence analysts who produce the final SIGINT. I played a small role, but took great pride in the work that came out of the MENA Extended Enterprise.

(S//SI) We have had a CIA Chief of Station drive to Ft. Meade to thank the Persian linguist who he said saved his life in Sarajevo. [Former DCI] George Tenet spent an hour in our spaces to explain the role SIGINT has played in the Middle East. In Iraq I wonder how many U.S. soldiers whose lives were saved because of our hard work -- no way to get metrics. But I know there are soldiers who would not have returned to their parents, wives, children, etc. without the work being done every day by all the people working the MENA mission, including our foreign partners. For my own part, every time I was able to get any one of these MENA people an award or promotion, it made my day.

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