



(U) Instant-Gratification SIGINT

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(TS//SI) Yesterday, SIDtoday presented a [pictorial](#) article showing life at CSG Baghdad. Today, tdy'er [REDACTED] puts pen to paper to answer the question: "What's it like to work at a Special Collection Service site in Iraq?"

(TS//SI) This summer I had the rare opportunity to be on the front lines of SIGINT collection by volunteering for what was originally a 45-day deployment to Mosul, Iraq, with [SCS](#). The fact that 45 days quickly turned into a 90-day deployment does not dissuade me from saying what an excellent experience the TDY was; I learned more about SIGINT in that 90 days than I had in the two previous years I'd been at the NSA or the 5 years I spent in the Army.

(TS//SI) One of the perks of being an Intelligence Analyst intern for the Agency is the diversity of tours you get to take within the NSA different product lines, and while I've had several great experiences during my time here, none can compare to the intense experience of serving with the SCS field site in Mosul. It's an experience that I like to call "instant gratification SIGINT," because in no other job had I seen such a quick return on our efforts. **You could pass location information on a bad guy to the Army, and half an hour later would receive a message that Stryker teams had rolled that bad guy up.** Nothing feels better than knowing you had direct involvement in the removal of a terrorist from the playing field.

(TS//SI) My trip to Mosul began and ended in Amman, Jordan, where I stayed at one of the hotels that 3 months later was hit by a suicide bomber in the 9 November 2005 attacks. SCS no longer sends its people through Amman, which is a shame, it's a beautiful part of the world.

(S) My next stop on the road to Mosul was Baghdad. I met up with the other individuals who were exiled -- er, assigned -- to Mosul and we received our weapons and body armor, then we spent a night in Saddam Hussein's personal VIP airport terminal. The next night we loaded up into a cargo flight for the run into Mosul. We landed at night, and I was working in the site less than an hour later - they're that busy. I must add at this point that I had not been outside in Iraq in the *daytime*. The next morning started off pleasant enough, but it wasn't long before it was 127 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. I'm not a fan of the heat, in fact I wear shorts in snow. Just so we're clear here, the desert heat is not my idea of happy fun time.



(TS//SI) SCS Mosul facility

(TS//SI) We had a saying at Mosul, "the days drag on but the months fly by." Truer words were never spoken. We worked for 14 to 18 hours a day, pouring over traffic and piecing together data to find threats or information that would help us locate and go get bad guys. You would feel every minute of those days, but you'd wake up one morning and it would be August. A typical day would also include collaboration meetings with the CIA, DIA, NIST* teams, and Army unit commanders and intelligence officers. We'd speak daily and meet weekly with the Army's CST* analysts, including Army Captain [REDACTED] who brought you the 18 November 2005 SID *today* article: "[Success Against al-Zargawi's Group in Northern Iraq.](#)" It was worth every second of the overtime. I cannot overstate how much good was done out there by everyone involved in the SIGINT process, civilian and military.

(TS//SI) My job in many respects was similar to the CST analysts, but we had a different slice of Mosul covered by our collection. While I worked a little of the collection end, 90% of my time was spent analyzing the traffic the linguists passed and reporting the information to both the

tactical level and back home on the national level. The volume of good, actionable intelligence that our collection pulled in was astounding: I authored 111 products in a 90-day period based off it. There was little time for our team to enjoy any recreational activities - our chance mostly came when the Iraqi cell networks crashed and the traffic stopped flowing - but there were many recreational activities offered.

(TS//SI) I was out there for the much of the 90-day period that CPT ██████ spoke of in his article, so it would be redundant for me to retell the entire story of the successes out there, but I will hit the highlights. **In a period of 90-days, the collaborative effort brought down the command structure of the Mosul QJBR terrorist network. I have no trouble believing that SIGINT was mostly responsible for this success.**

(TS//SI) The reason my original 45-day TDY turned into a 90-day stay was due to the difficulty in getting replacements out to Iraq. SCS doesn't have enough permanent analysts to staff all their positions, and has to rely on volunteers to fill the gaps. If you really want a chance to see immediate results on your hard work, I'd highly recommend contacting SCS and looking into volunteering.

*(U) Notes:

NIST = National Intelligence Support Team. See also some [background on NISTs](#) .

CST = Cryptologic Support Teams

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