

Welcoming the New Age of Intelligence

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of intelligence capabilities in the private sector. Although private sector intelligence is mostly associated with defense contractors such as CACI or Booz Allen Hamilton, corporations across various industries are opting to establish their own in-house intelligence units designed to protect their assets and operations. While intelligence continues to be seen primarily as a function of government, many intelligence professionals are retiring early from the Intelligence Community (IC) and shifting to the private sector. Within the last decade, companies have established intelligence centers as they realize they cannot solely rely on the United States Government and its services to protect their presence in high-risk regions. This paper will explore the extent to which intelligence units in the private sector mirror intelligence done in the government. Working primarily with Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT), analysts in the private sector are challenged to find data that may impact their employer – physical threats or in the cyber realm. The processes behind collecting and analyzing intelligence is not much different than in government. Various companies adhere to the traditional notion of the intelligence cycle, i.e. the intelligence unit has requirements and guidance, a collection plan, analysis and exploitation of sources and subsequent dissemination of information to decision-makers. It is likely that in the coming years, additional companies will develop intelligence units to mitigate the impact of emerging threats worldwide.

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Introduction

Intelligence as a profession has always been thought of solely as a function of government to protect the homeland. While intelligence was born out of the need to protect society and avoid surprise from enemies since the era of Sun Tzu, within the last few decades, private companies have taken initiative to adopt said intelligence functions to protect employees and assets worldwide. In addition to this new initiative by the private sector, a new trend is emerging where members of the United States Intelligence Community (USIC) are retiring from their governmental roles and joining the private sector as managers for the various new intelligence units being established. As a result, the private sector is benefiting from the extensive network of USIC contacts that these former government employees bring along with their experience, which is contributing to the crafting a new Private Intelligence Community (PIC) that relies mainly on the OSINT tradecraft.ⁱⁱ

Per Allen Dulles's claim on the ratio of intelligence collection, approximately 80% of all intelligence is found through open sources¹ (foreign media, academia, etc.); however, with the existence of social networks and the expansion of the internet, this percentage may be greater in modern times. The liberal acquisition of intelligence through open sources has allowed the private sector to assemble their own intelligence units, which rely on Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT), Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) and, to some extent, also on Human Intelligence (HUMINT). The implementation of these types of intelligence collection practices are giving the private sector the edge it needs to match the USIC's OSINT capabilities. Due to the development of intelligence functions in the private sector, it is now possible for companies to monitor and report real-time intelligence to company stakeholders as they seek to expand the company's footprint internationally to medium and high-risk locations. But because the ongoing monitoring of worldwide events also represents a major challenge for intelligence units, corporations are opting to engage with third-party vendors that have specialized services such as on-the-ground intelligence (Human Sources) and real-time GPS tracking. The inclusion of third-party intelligence

ii The following discussion will be based on available and relevant literature as well as expertise, interviews and know-how from the authors' extensive experience practicing intelligence in the private and government sector. The aim of this work is to create an explicative narrative of the existing intelligence units in the private sector. This work does not aim at debating or touching on theories that currently exist in the intelligence studies literature. In addition, the information collected and presented in this work derives from information publicly available from private intelligence companies as well from our own experience. It is necessary to state that all the information presented here does not represent the views or opinions of any private company in the United States of America.