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Canada and the Five Eyes Intelligence Community

James Cox on Canada's involvement in the world's most exclusive intelligence sharing club.

BY: JAMES COX (/CONTRIBUTORS/JAMES-COX/) / DECEMBER 18, 2012

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Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) are members of the Five Eyes intelligence community, the most exclusive intelligence sharing club in the world. This cooperative relationship is not monolithic, but it is certainly more cohesive than is generally known. It grew from UK-US intelligence cooperation in the Second World War, matured during the Cold War, and continues to protect the national interests of all members today. Moreover, the evolving international security environment signals a need for enhanced Five Eyes intelligence cooperation in the future.

Canadian foreign policy and trade initiatives will likely encounter new security issues, such as cyber threats (https://www.csis.gc.ca/pblctns/nnlrprt/2010-2011/rprt2010-2011-eng_final.asp#activities5) and foreign interference (https://www.csis.gc.ca/pblctns/nnlrprt/2010-2011/rprt2010-2011-eng_final.asp#efi) by competing state owned enterprises, which will augment, not replace, traditional threats, such as terrorism and transnational organized crime. In future, Canada will need more intelligence products from the Five Eyes intelligence community, not less, and vice versa.

Canadians remain generally unaware of the extent to which Canada's national security relies on Five Eyes intelligence cooperation. Consider the recent case of Royal Canadian Navy Sub-Lieutenant Jeffery Delisle, who supplied Top Secret intelligence to Russia, from 2007 until his arrest in January 2012. Media commentators claimed Delisle's actions seriously damaged Canada's participation in the Five Eyes intelligence community. However, as troubling as it may be, Delisle's betrayal will not permanently interfere with Five Eyes intelligence sharing arrangements. The relationship is made of sterner stuff.

This paper promotes greater understanding of the Five Eyes intelligence community, as it exists today. The focus settles on the community as a whole, not on individual intelligence organizations.

Some preliminary remarks about how the term 'Five Eyes' came about may be helpful at this point. In addition to assigning a level of classification to intelligence products (e.g. SECRET), dissemination at any level can be further restricted by use of a caveat that defines which 'eyes' may see the material. For example, a Top Secret document intended only for Canadian officials would be stamped as, "TOP SECRET – CANADIAN EYES ONLY." Canadian intelligence products to be shared with our closest intelligence allies are marked "SECRET – AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US EYES ONLY." In conversation, allied intelligence personnel adopted the term "Five Eyes" as a form of verbal shorthand because it was easier to say than "AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US." Although the term has only recently become common public knowledge, the Five Eyes relationship has existed for nearly seventy years.

The Five Eyes intelligence community grew out of close UK-US intelligence cooperation in the Second World War. During the early stages of the Cold War, faced by growing Soviet conventional and nuclear threats, American and British intelligence cooperation became even more intimate, particularly in the realm of signals intelligence (sigint) and cryptology. The 1946 British-US Communication Intelligence

(UKUSA) Agreement (http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukusa/) created a Top Secret sphere of sigint cooperation whose existence was denied by participating governments for many years. In tandem, other national intelligence organizations began to cooperate more closely with equivalent Five Eyes agencies.

Ties that bind partners are certainly stronger than most observers realize, but there is no formal over-arching international agreement that governs all Five Eyes intelligence relationships. In fact, rather than being centrally choreographed, the Five Eyes community is more of a cooperative, complex network of linked autonomous intelligence agencies. Individual intelligence organizations follow their own nationally legislated mandates, but interact with an affinity strengthened by their common Anglo-Saxon culture, accepted liberal democratic values and complementary national interests, all seasoned with a profound sense of confidence in each other and a degree of professional trust so strong as to be unique in the world.

Today, each group of cooperating intelligence organizations operates within its own complex legal and secret contexts. In all this, the relationship among Five Eyes sigint organizations remains the 'gold standard' of intelligence cooperation.

SIGINT

Briefly, sigint comes from the collection and analysis of electro-magnetic emissions broadcast throughout the global information grid. It has two principal components. First, communications intelligence (comint) is derived from the interception and analysis of electromagnetic communications and data links. Second, electronic intelligence (elint) collects and analyses non-communication emissions such as those used in radar detection, rocket telemetry and nuclear testing. Today, technological and computational advances create innumerable opportunities for the interception of diplomatic, military, scientific and commercial communications, as well as the extrapolation of radar, spacecraft and weapons systems characteristics. While it cannot always reveal what an opponent is thinking, sigint can tell you what he is saying and doing, from which adversarial capability and intent might be deduced. Most critically, sigint can provide warning of imminent enemy activity at various levels.

The Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC) is Canada's national sigint and cryptologic agency, and gateway into the Five Eyes sigint community. CSEC cooperates with the Australian Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) (http://www.dsd.gov.au); the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) (http://www.gcsb.govt.nz) in New Zealand; the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) (http://www.gchq.gov.uk/Pages/homepage.aspx), and the US National Security Agency (NSA) (http://www.nsa.gov).

CSEC and its partners have similar, bifurcated, operational mandates. Their first mission aims to provide information assurance services within government (http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/N-5/page-131.html#h-216). In the post 9/11 era cyber security concerns have pushed this mission to new heights of interest. Cyberspace is now an accepted domain of warfare and Five Eyes sigint agencies are the principal 'warfighters', engaged in a simmering campaign of cyber defence against persistent transnational cyber threats. The second mission is to provide government with foreign sigint in support of national decision-making. In doing so, CSEC and its Five Eyes partners rely on each other to share the collection and analysis burden. Even the massive NSA cannot cover all threats, everywhere, all the time.

Five Eyes sigint organizations remain officially responsible and accountable to their own governments, each of which retains the power of 'veto' over national sigint activity. Five Eyes sigint cooperation continues to be governed by the UKUSA Agreement and its associated technical instructions. A current version of the UKUSA Agreement is not publicly available, but sources indicate that the Agreement has evolved to keep abreast of modern threats and associated demands of sustaining a dominant cryptologic capability.

National sigint heads meet at least once a year to review their collective performance and plan future activity. During the Cold War, the agendae and tenor of these meetings were very much set by the US, because of the immense scope of NSA activities and the preeminence of American global responsibilities. Today, Five Eyes sigint chiefs meet essentially as equals because, even with the size and extent of US sigint activity, each partner realizes that they cannot meet national requirements alone. They all need each other.

Each Five Eyes partner collects information over a specific area of the globe in accordance with their national priorities, but their collection and analysis activities are orchestrated to the point that they essentially act as one. Precise assignments are not publicly known, but research indicates that Australia monitors South and East Asia emissions. New Zealand covers the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. The UK devotes attention to Europe and Western Russia, while the US monitors the Caribbean, China, Russia, the Middle East and Africa.

As it did during the Cold War, Canada's arctic territory provides considerable sigint advantage. Canadian Forces Station Alert, on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, was originally an arctic weather station, but began sigint duty by eavesdropping on northern regions of the Soviet Union in 1958. Alert remains active today, collecting information from the interior of Russia and China. Other Canadian sigint assets reach into Latin America and out into the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans.

Within this global sigint framework various intra-community relationships have gelled. In the maritime domain for example, Five Eyes surface and sub-surface sigint assets monitor international shipping traffic passing through maritime 'choke points,' particularly those routinely used by foreign submarines. In the aerospace domain, sigint assets cover foreign satellite deployments, ballistic missile testing, and activities of strategic air forces. Weapons procurement and associated illicit business dealings by rogue or otherwise problematic regimes also attract Five Eyes sigint attention, as do terrorist organizations throughout the world. Five Eyes sigint coverage may assist a member government engaged in sensitive international negotiations – be they diplomatic or economic – by eavesdropping on private conversations of other parties to the talks.

Formal agreements notwithstanding, Sigint sharing is a collegial exercise, based on an extraordinary degree of trust and confidence. In day-to-day work, a great many sigint products are routinely shared among the Five Eyes. One can therefore see how instances of espionage, like the Delisle case, can be damaging to the reputation of a Five Eyes country and disturb the community relationship as a whole.

Five Eyes partners apparently do not target each other, nor does any partner seek to evade their national laws by requesting or accepting such activity. There is, however, no formal way of ensuring such eavesdropping does not take place. Each partner is trusted to adhere to this 'gentleman's agreement' between allies.

The Five Eyes sigint community also plays a 'core' role in a larger galaxy of sigint organizations found in established democratic states, both west and east. Five Eyes 'plus' gatherings in the west include Canada's NATO allies and important non-NATO partners such as Sweden. To the east, a Pacific version of the Five Eyes 'plus' grouping includes, among others, Singapore and South Korea. Such extensions add 'reach' and 'layering' to Five Eyes sigint capabilities.

There are other Five Eyes intelligence groupings that come close to achieving the unity found in the sigint relationship. One of them is the national assessments community.

National Assessments

Within the Canadian Privy Council Office (PCO), the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat (IAS) provides all-source strategic intelligence assessments to government. Domestically, the IAS supports the Deputy Ministers' Intelligence Assessment (DMIA) Committee, which is the most senior body dealing with assessment issues in Canada.

Acting abroad, the IAS represents Canada in the Five Eyes national assessments partnership. In Australia, the IAS equivalent is the Office of National Assessments (ONA) (http://www.ona.gov.au/about-ona.html). The National Assessment Bureau (NAB) (http://www.dpmc.govt.nz/nab) promulgates New Zealand's national assessments. The IAS also works with the British Cabinet Office Assessments Staff (COAS) (http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/joint-intelligence-organisation).

Canadian national assessment links to the US are somewhat more complicated than those with other Five Eyes assessment staffs, mainly because of the sheer size and intricacy of the US intelligence community. The IAS exercises two principal links in Washington. First, it pursues foreign intelligence assessments of the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Directorate of Intelligence (DI) (https://www.cia.gov/offices-of-cia/intelligence-analysis/index.html). Second, the IAS also cooperates closely with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) (http://www.state.gov/s/inr/) in the US State Department, largely through the sharing of draft assessments and analyst visits. The IAS-INR link is complemented by the INR relationship with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) Threat Assessment and Intelligence Services Division, by which both parties share diplomatic reporting and threat analysis.

The Five Eyes national assessment community is professionally tight, bound by gravities of trust and confidence. Heads of national assessments meet at least annually and joint working groups are formed when needed to address relevant issues of mutual concern. Inter-agency contact is routine at working levels, where the default inclination is to consult widely before assessments are finalized and provided to government. This habit of analytical consultation should not be seen as a pejorative influence on Canadian assessments. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Other Five Eyes reviews of draft Canadian material ensures the IAS has considered an appropriately wide range of factors and issues prior to finalizing its conclusions and judgments. Conversely, the IAS is routinely invited to critique drafts of material produced by other Five Eyes partners. This cross-pollination of analysis and critique serves to inform, not sway, national decision-making.

Canadian participation in Five Eyes sigint and national assessment communities is complemented by a nearly equivalent relationship in the defence intelligence field, to which we now turn our attention.

Defence Intelligence

Defence intelligence deals with foreign defence and military capabilities and intentions. It is derived from military intelligence and provided to government decision-makers. The Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) represents Canada in the Five Eyes defence intelligence community. One partner is the Australian Defence Intelligence Organization (DIO) (http://www.defence.gov.au/dio/). The Directorate of Defence Intelligence and Security (DDIS) (http://www.dpmc.govt.nz/dpmc/publications/securingoursafety/ddis), is the CDI equivalent in New Zealand. The CDI is also linked to the UK Defence Intelligence Service (DIS) (http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/SecurityandIntelligence/DIS/). In the US, the CDI works with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) (http://www.dia.mil).

At least twice each year, the CDI meets with other Five Eyes heads of defence intelligence to address strategic issues of mutual concern. A network of intelligence liaison officers deployed among all partners facilitates consultation. Canadian Forces Intelligence Liaison Officers (CFILOs) are located in Washington, London and Canberra (cross-accredited to New Zealand). All Five Eyes defence intelligence partners are connected by a dedicated and secure Top Secret communications link nicknamed *Stoneghost*, the system to which Sub-Lieutenant Delisle had access.

When deployed outside Canada, Canadian Forces units invariably operate within a Five Eyes intelligence framework, as was the case during Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan. Intelligence support to Canadian military operations in Kandahar province was provided by an All-Source Intelligence Centre (ASIC), which was something of a microcosm of the Canadian and Five Eyes intelligence communities. In addition to military intelligence personnel, the ASIC hosted representatives of the Canadian Border Services Agency, Corrections Services Canada, CSEC, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, DFAIT, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Australian, UK and US intelligence personnel also supported the ASIC, which itself had links to equivalent UK and US organizations in neighbouring operational areas. The ASIC produced innovative and actionable intelligence products by integrating sigint, geospatial intelligence, human intelligence (humint) and other analyzed information.

The Five Eyes defence intelligence community is interlaced with similar links in all five domains of warfare – maritime, land, air, space and

cyberspace – producing a horizontal and vertical structural density not seen in other intelligence disciplines.

The Future

Over and above Canada's participation in the Five Eyes sigint, national assessment and defence intelligence communities, other Canadian intelligence organizations enjoy Five Eyes links. In addition to geospatial intelligence, intelligence relationships are also found in the fields of geospatial intelligence, national security intelligence, law enforcement intelligence, justice, finance, and transportation security. These relationships, all based on deep trust and confidence, strengthen the enduring cohesiveness of the Five Eyes relationship.

It is this cohesiveness that makes the Delisle incident nothing more than a troublesome speed bump on the road to enhanced intelligence sharing. Granted, Canada must work to restore the trust and confidence of its Five Eyes partners, but they all must recognize that there are bigger issues looming. Geo-strategic developments and evolving security threats demand an enduring and strengthened Five Eyes relationship. In the wake of Delisle's escapade, not only must Canada continue to contribute credible and valuable intelligence support to its partners, the Five Eyes intelligence community as a whole must remain integrated, effective and dominant.

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