



(U//FOUO) Providing Actionable Intelligence in Mosul

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Here's another report from an NSA'er who served on a Cryptologic Support Team in Iraq (S)

(S//REL) Two memories stand out when I think of my experience with CST STRYKER in Mosul, Iraq. I remember sleeping for several nights on the dirty marble floor of our SCIF* because there was a viable threat that the compound would be attacked with "overwhelming force." I don't remember the fear, though like everyone there, I was afraid. I remember being exhausted and cranky, wanting nothing more than coffee and a shower. Coffee we had in abundance, but I didn't want to risk a shower, which would draw me to the most frequently mortared part of camp. And no one wants to die in the shower.

(S//SI) Another memory that made a lasting impression was while walking home one night around 0300, after supporting a mission using techniques our team had developed. The mission had apparently been a dry hole, so I left heavy with disappointment. I stopped by the Operations Center to drop off a SIM card** reader (which were scarce, so we loaned ours out to several units), when I walked into what seemed like the eye of a storm.

(S//SI) One of the military analysts alerted me that the mission had, in fact, been successful. (See [Congressional notification](#) on the subject.) The finishing force was on their way in the door with several bags of evidence to be exploited -- documents, a laptop, and cell phones. I handed over the SIM card reader, knowing it would be put to good use that night, and was immediately asked to stay and help exploit the phones to confirm the identities of the detainees.

(S//SI) As GSM phones spilled out of a canvas bag onto the desktop, I formed an assembly line with an intelligence analyst and an assaulter, just off the objective, to remove the SIM cards, exploit them using the reader, label the handset and the card, and make a list of the numbers found. We worked swiftly in the swirl of yelling voices, men running back and forth, bags being dumped on the floor, and computer screens flashing incessantly. During this process, we found out that we had not one, but two high-value targets in addition to several lower-level facilitators.

(S//REL) After packing up the phones, which had to accompany the detainees to their interrogation site, I remember walking home just before the sun came up. I had never felt so satisfied as when I crashed on my bed in my trailer and closed my eyes, knowing that seven terrorists were off the street due solely to the support provided by the STRYKER SIGINT cell and the competence of the operators we supported. It was the first of many such nights.

(S//SI) Much of the analysis that we do in [A&P](#) is not that hard to learn. Within a few months, I saw 98Cs (tactical SIGINTers) who were as proficient with databases, NSA lingo, tasking, and analysis as most NSA analysts. The things they learned from me -- geospatial analysis, call chaining, Arcview, Cultweave, Association, GSM tracking -- were easy lessons compared to what they taught me.

(U//FOUO) I saw soldiers work through the night, every night for months, knowing only that they were supporting important operations, but without knowing exactly what their analysis was being used for. People volunteered to work beyond their responsibility, to support the soldiers who have the capability to take action against the terrorists, but would not otherwise get the SIGINT support they needed.

(S//REL) The best and most successful SIGINT team I have had the honor of working with in my four years at NSA has been the soldiers of the 1-25 STRYKER Brigade Combat Team. Nowhere else have I met analysts so eager to learn, mission-focused, or creative. They were

inexperienced and young, but they were able to produce more actionable intelligence than any other team I've encountered. Their success was due to their flexibility, gumption, and ability to push the envelope of normal procedures -- qualities I have found more valuable than having a room full of subject-matter experts.

(U) Notes:

*SCIF = Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility

**SIM card = Subscriber Identification Module card that carries GSM subscriber data and activates the phone when inserted.

(U//FOUO) See another recent article from a CST'er: [\(U//FOUO\) How NSA Teams Support Tactical Forces in Iraq](#).

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