



(S//SI) NSA Tipoff Leads to Rescue of Serviceman in Afghanistan

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SIGINT yields location of missing Navy SEAL. (S//SI)

(S//SI) Events surrounding the fate of a four-man Special Operational Forces team in Afghanistan have made newspaper headlines in recent days. Sadly, two of the men were confirmed killed, and efforts continue to locate a third. However, the fourth man was rescued, with NSA playing a key role. Here's how the story unfolded:

(U) On June 28th, a Navy SEAL reconnaissance team operating in the Afghanistan/Pakistan border area came under heavy fire from hostile militiamen and needed extraction. A Quick Reaction Force deployed to pick up the men, but their Chinook helicopter was hit by a probable rocket-propelled grenade while attempting to land. The helicopter crashed, rolled and caught fire, leaving little chance for survivors. (The bodies were subsequently recovered.)

(TS//SI) Meanwhile, attempts to locate and rescue the SEALs continued. The NSOC Senior Collection Officer (SCO) tasked the Meade Operations Center with assisting in the Search and Rescue effort. On July 2nd, a young airman in the MOC's Tactical Research Cell picked up the tail end of a transmission on a Search and Rescue frequency that was a deep male voice speaking American English.

(TS//SI) The airman quickly directed geo-location efforts and in near real-time (using the SALEM collection and COGS-X geolocation systems) obtained a centerpoint in an area about 50 km from where the SEALs were expected to be and where search efforts were at that time underway. Because of the apparent disparity in locations, military officials in Afghanistan requested MOC confirmation of the geo-locational information, and following receipt of that confirmation immediately launched another rescue mission. Just over two hours after the MOC tip-off, one of the missing SEALs was recovered in the area of the geo-located signal.

(S//SI) The combined efforts of NSOC and the MOC directly contributed to the rescue of the American serviceman in Afghanistan. This is an outstanding example of how SIGINTers can really make a difference in savings lives. Well done!


(U) A Chinook helicopter in
Afghanistan (Reuters)


(U) U.S. helicopter in Kunar Province, near the
Afghanistan/Pakistan border (Reuters)

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