

(S//SI//REL) What's NSA's Reputation Among Third Parties? What Are the Japanese Like as SIGINTers?

FROM: the SIDtoday Editor

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(S//SI//REL) SIDtoday recently interviewed the Chief, Special US Liaison Activity, Japan (SUSLAJ), [REDACTED] (pictured) while he was in town, to find out about NSA's dealings with Japan and other Third Parties, among other topics...

- ***1. (U//FOUO) You have many years of experience in working with foreign governments, including work as an official NSA representative to Third Parties. What is NSA's reputation among its Third Party SIGINT counterparts? ...Is that reputation fairly consistent across all countries, or does it vary greatly from one to the other?***

(U//FOUO) I believe that with Third Parties, NSA's reputation is very good across the board. Foreign countries recognize us as the best in the field. Foreign partners want to work with us, because they realize that cooperating with us is in their own self-interest -- it doesn't just benefit the US, but rather it helps **them** to become more secure as well. They trust us as a partner, because of who we are and what we do. NSA has expertise and integrity.

(C//REL) In fact, we (NSA) are sometimes such a "hot commodity" that other US agencies, and even US ambassadors, have used a new or expanded relationship with NSA as a quid. The host government officials often are interested for their own security needs and for a perceived "chair at the table"... such a proposition may in turn pry open the door for other dealings between our countries.

- ***2. (S//SI//REL) You now serve as the chief NSA representative in Japan. What are the Japanese like as SIGINTers? Are their methods of conducting SIGINT similar to NSA's?***

(S//SI//REL) I'd say that in some respects DFS [Japan's Directorate for SIGINT] has a methodology that *is* similar to ours, albeit still caught in a Cold War way of doing business. They are very accomplished SIGINTers, especially in the areas of signals analysis and Technical SIGINT. There is a difference, however, in how they are organized. They treat SIGINT as a special-access program -- the most sensitive program they have. The result is that they are rather stove-piped, somewhat like NSA was 10-or-more years ago. Since they treat SIGINT in such a close-hold manner, it's very hard to engage them in multi-national forums or even to get them to collaborate across Japanese governmental lanes. Bilaterally (NSA-DFS) they are a good partner, but they are very reluctant to participate with mixed or larger groups.

- ***3. (U) What is it like to live in Japan?***

(U) Japan is a great place to live. It has a wonderful culture that embraces the past -- it's infused in all they do-- yet they incorporate the past with the present. Japan also has a lot of natural beauty. Japan is very safe -- a great place to raise a family. Sometimes driving can be difficult due to the traffic, but the mass transit system is very easy to use -- they have it down pat! Tokyo is expensive -- the second-most expensive city in the world. Overall, most Americans who PCS to Japan like it and extend. [Note: see a [video](#) about life in Yokota, Japan.]

- **4. (U) How much international exposure did you have prior to joining NSA, and how did it happen that you came to work at the Agency?**

(U) I served in Vietnam in the military. A few years after I left the service, I backpacked from Australia to Europe for 11 months. I stopped off at different locations to earn money, thereby giving me the opportunity to live and work with the people. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Cornell University later sent me to Indonesia for further study of Indonesian language and culture. This was a total immersion program where I lived with an Indonesian family and all my lectures and papers were in Indonesian. So, those were my major international exposures prior to NSA. Each gave me an opportunity to not only live in a foreign country but to see it from the inside -- from the perspective of the natives of those countries. I was recruited by the Agency while at Cornell University in the early 1980s.

- **5. (U) If you had to pick one or two of the most memorable experiences you've had during your NSA career, what would they be?**

(S//REL) It's hard to limit it to just two, since I have been fortunate to have so many "memorable experiences." One experience would be my serving as part of a team working the Philippine target in the 1980s. The then-Philippine Branch was awarded the DCI's Meritorious Unit Citation for exceptional intelligence support during a prolonged period of turmoil in that country. I was given the honor of receiving the citation on behalf of the Branch from the then-DCI, Judge Webster. During my tenure the Branch worked 13 coup attempts, a political assassination (Ninoy Aquino) and the "Yellow Revolution" [in which Ninoy's wife Corazon took power]. We also provided intelligence support to counter two and a half insurgencies - rebellions by: 1) the Communist NPA [New People's Army]; 2) two main factions of the Islamic secessionist (Moros) on Mindanao, and finally by a rebellious faction of the Filipino military led by Colonel Honosan (that's the "half").

(S//REL) The second experience that comes to mind occurred when I was the first NCR [NSA/CSS Representative] to Pakistan in 2004. I was given the privilege to lead a top-notch team of NSAers (three were interns) that made-up the first NSA team to Islamabad. (We called ourselves "Team IBAD 1"). The CIA officials there in Pakistan were pleased that NSA had sent people to the fight in Pakistan, but they considered us to be two and a half years too late in coming! Some CIA officers in the Station doubted that NSA could really add anything beyond what CIA had already put in place. Needless to say, we were eager to prove them wrong. We didn't have to wait long...

Pakistani armored vehicles in operations against Islamic militants in the Northwest Frontier of Pakistan (Reuters)

(S//REL) On the very first day we were up and running, the Pakistani military got into a fight in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. At about 0200 or 0300 our team received a visit from the Station's Tribal Area Branch Chief. He told us that "you guys are the only game in town!" -- meaning that SIGINT was providing the only picture of events in the tribal area and we were getting that information into the right hands in a timely manner. It was great to be able to show right off the bat like that what NSA

is capable of. When Team IBAD 1 rotated out the Chief of Station presented each member with a plaque with the inscription "Hearing is Believing."

(U//FOUO) I could name a lot of other incidents, as well -- I've never had a bad job working for NSA. Working with good people has been the important ingredient to my good work experiences. In my view, the key to success is this: surround yourself with smart, motivated people, and you'll be guilty by association... I've had 17 different positions in my 27-year career -- usually to start up something new or bring about major changes.

- (U) ...*How did that come about?*

(U//FOUO) [Former NSA Deputy Director] Bill Black told me that the Agency leadership wanted to "stretch me." The thinking was that's how you develop leaders: you have to take them out of their comfort zone and be willing to accept some broken glass. I agree. You, as a leader, have to have confidence in people -- to give them confidence that no "rocks" will come crashing down on them. The rocks will stop at the supervisor's level. I, however, always tell the folks working with me that I would appreciate knowing when a rock is rolling my way! In my experience the end result is worth the risks.