

CONFRONTATION OR COLLABORATION?
CONGRESS AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY



INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Just as the Departments of Defense and State seek to develop strong alliances to achieve our military and diplomatic objectives, the Intelligence Community (IC) maintains robust 'liaison' relationships with many countries around the world. These relationships have proven important over the past several years, as other nations often have access to intelligence and can implement direct action that the U.S. requires to pursue its national security interests. While valuable, liaison relationships can also pose risks and require conscientious oversight by Congress.

This memo provides an overview of these foreign liaison relationships, as well as how these partnerships can strengthen U.S. national security.

Advantages to Foreign Intelligence Relationships

The U.S. benefits from international or liaison partnerships because they provide:

- *Access:* Liaison may have access to or information about areas denied to direct U.S. penetration.
- *Speed:* Liaison may be able to gather and disseminate crucial data, giving the U.S. the ability to respond to time-sensitive threats.
- *Insight:* Liaison may have greater cultural understanding into a particular issue that the U.S. may otherwise misinterpret.
- *Ability to Perform Direct Action:* Liaison sometimes can provide direct military force to solve a particular problem, usually within their home country.
- *Cover for U.S. Interests:* Liaison may be able to mask U.S. actions as local ones, obscuring otherwise obvious U.S. behavior in foreign countries.

Disadvantages of Foreign Intelligence Relationships

Liaison relationships with foreign services have disadvantages as well. The U.S. must remain vigilant for signs of:

- *Conflicting Interests:* Liaison may provide adversaries with critical sensitive information about U.S. interests, strategies and plans.
- *Hostile Collection:* Liaison may attempt to gain insight into U.S. intentions, sources and methods through overt or covert means.
- *Poor Information Gathering:* Liaison may use less rigorous collection methods than the U.S.,

often obliging Intelligence Community analysts to independently verify specific information.

- *Moral Hazards:* Members of foreign intelligence services may be involved in unethical or illegal activities, or utilize illegal methods to obtain intelligence.

International Cooperation

U.S. national security interests have long rested upon international cooperation between intelligence services. The post-WWII era ushered in a series of both formal and ad-hoc relationships that have linked the nation's various intelligence agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA), with their foreign counterparts. Some examples of this cooperation include:

- Close cooperation between the U.S. and the United Kingdom in 2006 thwarted a plot to destroy civilian aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean.
- U.S. and Pakistan in 2003 worked in tandem to capture alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaykh Muhammad.
- The U.S. disseminates satellite imagery to third countries in order to combat narcotics production.

Commonwealth Partners

The U.S. maintains special intelligence relationships with the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand that generally allow for increased information sharing among the countries. This multilateral relationship, developed in the years after WWII, culminates in a high-level annual meeting that serves as a platform to discuss the various problems facing these nations.

Non-Traditional Allies

The U.S. also benefits from liaison relationships with organizations that are not nation-states. For example, the U.S. maintains partnerships with specific tribal groups and political parties, especially those that exist in countries that lack strong central governments but are nevertheless deemed critical to U.S. national security interests.

The U.S. has historically also worked with the security organizations in countries that provide unique links to key national security priorities. These relationships are often complex and require special oversight scrutiny from Congress. For example:

Pakistan: The U.S. relationship with Pakistan and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has arguably been one of the U.S.'s most complicated intelligence partnerships. The U.S. and Pakistan, along with Saudi Arabia, worked together to fund, train and equip Afghans fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Today, the ISI remains a critical and invaluable resource for the Intelligence Community to help locate Islamic militants, Taliban operatives and top members of al-Qaeda. Without assistance from the ISI, U.S. efforts to apprehend or eliminate major terrorist threats around the world would suffer significantly.

Some experts suspect, however, that small elements of the ISI and Pakistan's military establishment may be sympathetic to the Taliban and other militants. These suspicions have at times strained the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship. These conflicting signals compound pre-existing concerns by the U.S. about the ISI's general autonomy from Islamabad's command, as well as Pakistan's overall ability to maintain control over the increasingly chaotic Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

Sudan: While both countries can benefit from intelligence partnerships, especially when national interests align on the issue of counterterrorism, U.S. policymakers must decide if the benefits of a relationship outweigh concerns about the rule of law or human rights. For example, the U.S. and Sudanese intelligence officials worked together to track Usama bin Ladin when he resided in Khartoum during the 1990s. According to the press, Sudan has also occasionally assisted the U.S. in tracking al-Qaeda operatives. Nevertheless, the U.S.-Sudan relationship has been strained because of serious and legitimate concerns about the Sudanese government's involvement in the genocide in Darfur.

Considering Future Cooperation

As the IC continues to form new information-sharing relationships with foreign entities, members of Congress should continue to evaluate:

- *Motivations of Liaison Partners:* Foreign intelligence services are foremost concerned with their own self-interest, so the Intelligence Community and U.S. policymakers should remain cognizant that these organizations—even those considered friendly to the U.S.—may have ulterior motives in presenting information to American officials. Foreign liaison also may be motivated to exploit the U.S.'s significant capabilities to further their own interests.
- *The Scope of the Relationship:* The U.S. should consider the appropriate type of partnership that best suits each country's requirements. For instance, while some relationships may be based on short-term specific needs, others may encompass larger long-term strategies.

- *Potential for Broader Influence:* Liaison relationships between intelligence services can sometimes allow for warmer partnerships between the U.S. and potentially adversarial foreign entities. For example, the U.S. and China maintain a military-to-military relationship despite a sometimes contentious political history because the U.S. generally views the partnership as a mechanism to minimize miscalculations between the armed forces, foster pro-American feelings among younger Chinese officers and gain Chinese cooperation on specific international security issues.

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