

C/O
Assessment
of SOFSAT

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THE PRESENT
SPECIAL FORCES



THE NEAR TERM
NSW DAM NECK



THE FUTURE
OGA - SAC

ORBIS SOFSAT



C/O Assessment of SOFSAT

Imagine the following scenario as it happens on a daily basis and is occurring somewhere in the world as you read this: An OGA case officer (C/O) sits down with a "walk-in" at a US Embassy. The walk-in tells the C/O that he has significant first-hand information about a terrorist organization and wants to share the information with the US in return for money. The man claims three points: his cousin is part of the terrorist organization, the group has 10 kilos

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of explosives which they plan to use imminently in country X, and a man named Y will be the suicide bomber. To be sure, all three pieces of information are of high interest to the C/O...as long as they are true. And so, the dance begins of the C/O using every tool available to him to vet the source, as well as the information, to determine the source's veracity. The procedure that ensues is, of course, undeniably essential prior to putting faith (and finances) into the source; but what if the C/O were able to formulate a more definitive *baseline* of the source at the first meeting via an enhanced knowledge of human behavior and the corresponding body language that accompanies it? Certainly, C/O's are considerable experts at reading an individual in order to assess them, but it is a skill that takes significant time and repetition to refine. What happens then if the C/O meeting with this walk-in is a first tour officer fresh out of the Farm? Yes, he has been given the best espionage training in the world and can execute a CPU with his eyes closed (though that wouldn't be advised) but what training has he received on assessing an individual not just on what they are saying through their words but also what they are saying with their body? The answer, sadly, is none.

With this in mind, we can already predict how the C/O's cable would read - "C/O Thorne met walk-in Z who alleged to have access to A, B, and C. Request HQS trace Z to help C/O determine Z's veracity. Due to the importance of Z's allegations, C/O will meet with Z again to follow up." Again, the assistance from HQS has tremendous value and will play a considerable role in determining the source's veracity, but what if the C/O was already able to establish a baseline of deception in the source after the very first meet? Would that not also be immensely valuable? "The walk-in appears to be a visual learner as he looks up and to the right when he is recalling memories. That said, when asked for a description of his cousin, Z consistently looked down and to the left when accessing information. Z also covered his mouth when describing the 10 kilos of explosives and began rubbing the back of his neck with an increased blink rate. Based on C/O's understanding of heuristics and human behavior, C/O believes Z's information on the explosives is either dishonest or not entirely forthcoming. Naturally, this is the first meeting with Z but a baseline has now been established and will be compared against at the subsequent meeting." Unquestionably, this is a far more powerful C/O Assessment and a much more cerebral intelligence officer.

*Not a question of
if; a question of
when?*



And the only acceptable answer is *right now*. As the preeminent entity within the Intelligence Community, it is quintessential that the Agency lead the way in all forms of collection, especially via HUMINT. Intel delayed = intel denied

OGA Need for SOFSAT

Though it might feel like an eternity to the trainee, FTC certification lasts four months at the training center colloquially known as the Farm. During this training, the emphasis is on source handling and the Agent Lifecycle - Spot, Assess, Develop, Recruit, Handle, Terminate. Surveillance, counter-surveillance, and counter intelligence are covered in more broad terms with the ability to take more defined courses upon the completion of FTC. With the focus, therefore, being placed primarily on personal interaction with the intent of collecting intelligence, it is clear then that the goal of the Farm is to produce an intelligence officer with superior interpersonal skills. A term that is drilled into each trainee no less than 500 times daily is that of building *rapport*. Trainees are taught how to manipulate a potential target, how to assuage a devastated asset, and how to spar with a source who refuses to take your advice. All of these scenarios are exceedingly dialectical with the focus on having a response to whatever is being said. But what if you could greatly enhance this skill by not only hearing what your source is saying and determining how to respond, but also understanding what the source is saying nonverbally; often without even knowing it?

That is precisely what SOFSAT teaches - how to read the individual with whom you are engaging and compare their behavior to a baseline you have established for them since your very first interaction. Orbis has considerable holdings on the science behind their instruction and the teaching methods that are employed, which can accompany this document as deemed necessary. I have not been to their internal academy to certify as an instructor, and as of the writing of this document, I am glad I have not as it has given me the ability to objectively review the instruction from both a student and instructor perspective *at the same time*. What I can say in sum is this: I wish I would have had this training before I deployed to the field because it would have made me a much more effective officer. Because not only does this skill teach you how to read others but it makes you definitively self-aware of what you are projecting to others without even realizing it. Observing this course has also helped me to realize that I was subconsciously picking up on much more than I realized; I simply didn't have the scientific lexicon to describe what I was seeing and thereby file it appropriately in my mind.

If it isn't clear thus far, I will unambiguously state that this training has had a profound effect on me and has changed the way I interact with people because I am now self-aware of the image I am projecting. I am also cognizant of what they are saying to me without using any words. Case officers like to fancy themselves as masters of verbal judo but through this training I realize how much I was missing because the language (that was always there) was simply not audible. I have done some reflection on a variety of different scenarios that occurred during my time in the field that did not go the way I wanted and I have questioned whether an understanding of SOFSAT would have been able to mitigate the problem. In some cases, I unfortunately don't believe anything could have turned the situation around. But I do offer these two very real occurrences from my past that I am quite certain would have played out much differently if I knew then what I do now.

Scenario 1 - *Cultural Norms*

I had a source in country X who was a prominent figure who, while lacking individual access to information of value, was friends with a great many individuals who did have access. Let's call my source M/1. I would use M/1 to facilitate introductions to his friends and in some cases, help me to manipulate his friends into working with me. To be clear, I mean to say he helped me turn them into spies. After a year and half, M/1 had introduced me to countless individuals but two in particular, M/2 and M/3, were of tremendous value and I ended up recruiting both with M/1's assistance. Agency dogma suggests one source per meeting to maintain compartmentalization. But in M/1's case, I noticed that my meetings were much more productive with M/2 and M/3 when M/1 was present. While I spoke the language of this country, I could never pretend to be an expert of their culture and at the time, believed M/2 and M/3 were simply more comfortable having a fellow countrymen (M/1) present at their meetings. Fast forward another year and M/1 was present for nearly all of M/2 and 3's meetings though I noticed that M/2 was becoming increasingly despondent during meetings and would require considerable encouragement from M/1 to relate all of his information. Again, at the time I saw M/1 as a benefit in getting M/2 to cooperate but anyone could tell that M/2 was not happy. I addressed the issue with M/2 privately and he assured me he was fine. I spoke about M/2 with M/1 privately as well and was even further reassured by M/1 that everything was fine. So, I lazily wrote it off as a cultural aspect that I didn't comprehend and continued to run all three sources.

Six months later I reengaged with an individual that had been introduced to me by M/1 but was not willing to work with me at the time. He alleged that he had spoken with M/2 who revealed to him that he was working for me and that M/1 was also a double agent of the local service. I was shocked and did not want to believe what I was hearing. So, I made the decision to address the issue with M/2 who after considerable prodding eventually admitted to me that M/1 was indeed working with the local service. Not only that, but he had co-opted M/2 six months prior - right around the time M/2's baseline changed drastically during our meetings - and informed M/2 that if he didn't cooperate with the local service as well he would be arrested for espionage. I cannot talk about the details of the investigation that ensued but the end result was the termination of both M/1 and M/2.

Not surprisingly, I was devastated to lose what was undeniably an important stream of reporting in M/2, but termination was the only acceptable solution for my mistakes. I couldn't believe I missed it at the time but am even more thoroughly embarrassed now after receiving SOFSAT instruction. All of the cues were there. M/2 was producing when M/1 was present because M/1 was coaching M/2 what to say. I interpreted this as M/1 prodding M/2 to share his information when in fact it was M/1 giving M/2 to the green light on what to divulge and what to withhold. It was happening right in front of my face and I didn't notice it once! I can distinctly recall how M/2 would sit oriented toward M/1 and would have to turn his head to speak to me. How M/2 would constantly rub his forehead and eyes while listening to M/1 speak which I assumed was simply a nervous tick. How M/1 would shake my hand differently than he shook my bodyguard's. Again, I assumed this was a cultural norm. No, this was M/1 going over the top with me to assert authority with me even before the meeting began. I wish I had videos of the meetings with M/1-3 so that I could pick them apart now to realize just how blind I truly was back then. Unfortunately I don't, but the bottom line is this; if I had the SOFSAT skill set during my interactions with M/1-3 I am confident I would not have simply wrote everything off as a cultural difference that I didn't understand. The fact is, I did understand and I did see what was going on - I simply didn't have the lexicon to describe it to myself.

Scenario 2 - *Razor's Edge*

Several years after Scenario 1, I was in country Y working with a defector from country Z we will call J/1. I like to believe I was a better officer who had learned a lot during my time in country X. M/1 certainly taught me a thing or two about Agent Management but to be sure, I was still lacking the lexicon to properly identify what I was seeing and not just hearing. The mistakes I made with J/1 will blatantly illustrate that point. I had been meeting with J/1 for circa 5 months along with the local liaison service as I was a declared officer in country Y. J/1 told me very little during our meetings but we knew from other streams of reporting that J/1 knew much more than he let on, he just wasn't telling us...yet. One day J/1 decided to tell me in front of the local service that he hated working with the local service and it would be much better if he could simply work for me. The local service was infuriated much to my delight and my Chief agreed that we should attempt to meet with J/1 independently. As such, I made contact with J/1's son, J/2, who delivered the message to J/1 and thus a unilateral relationship developed. J/2 was present during each of my private meetings with J/1 which regularly occurred in hotel rooms. J/1's baseline did a complete 180 and he was wonderfully cooperative and forthcoming with what he really knew. J/2, on the other hand, made it clear (verbally) on several occasions that he did not approve of the way OGA interfered in his home country Z. I registered this, as it was audibly presented to me, but I never paid J/2 much mind since he wasn't the source of intel. That was a costly mistake.

After about a month of meeting privately with J/1, J/2 sent me a message informing me that his father wanted to meet again. This was strange as I communicated directly with J/1 but J/2 alleged that his father did not have his equipment with him and asked J/2 to signal the meeting. I was suspicious but decided to make the meeting at a hotel outside of town. J/2 was 45 minutes late to escort me to the room which was odd since he came out of the elevator which meant he had clearly been in the hotel waiting. J/2 was also sweating as we waited for the elevator which, again, I should have found odd considering he had already been in the hotel air conditioning. As we entered the elevator, J/2 moved to the far right of the elevator (or left if you are looking at the elevator doors from the inside) and stood silently. I expected him to hit the appropriate button for the floor the meeting would take place but the doors shut and the lift didn't move. I asked J/2 in his language which floor and he appeared confused. I figured he just didn't understand my accent so I pointed at the buttons on the wall. J/2 pressed the corresponding button and then put his left hand in his pocket, took something out, flipped his left thumb forward, and then held the object between his left leg and the elevator wall. I couldn't tell what it was, and even though I didn't have the lexicon to describe what I was seeing, my brain was telling me something was off. SOFSAT would have told me via *most likely/most dangerous* that I was *most likely* in a *most dangerous situation*.

Looking back, I think I instinctively knew from the heuristics I was seeing that J/2 had opened a knife blade with his left thumb *but I didn't want that to be true*, so I discounted it. When J/2 presented the knife to my face a few moments later I wished I hadn't. Just prior to showing me the blade, the elevator doors opened and J/2 motioned for me to exit first. Simply being polite - not because I was being vigilant - I asked J/2 to exit first with my gratitude. J/2 angrily shouted for me to get off the elevator and it was only then that I knew I was in real trouble. So much so, that I blurted out "What's in your hand?" which resulted in him answering that query by showing me. I am quite certain that no less than a thousand thoughts registered in my head in the three seconds that followed but the overriding thought was this: *Stay in the elevator. If he has to attack you, it will be*

here and now. I'm not getting my head cut off on camera. I am by no means a self-defense expert so disarming J/2 with a spin kick like Patrick Swayze in Roadhouse wasn't an option. Instead, I put the ball in his court and in doing so, called his bluff. J/2 didn't want to kill me but he did want to scare me. Mission accomplished. After probably no more than 5 seconds, J/2 put the knife away and exited the elevator. Ten minutes later I got a phone call from his father apologizing for what had just happened. Needless to say, from that point forward, J/2 was not welcome at any of our subsequent meetings. But the question that needs to be asked is could I have predicted this? Should I have predicted this? Judging from J/2's baseline established over the course of six previous meetings, I would say the decision to meet privately with J/2 anywhere was a horrible decision. His body language screamed that he hated my guts and his actions eventually proved that first hand in an event that could have escalated into serious violence. I was lucky but I would have preferred to have been smarter. Smarter than J/2, and smart enough to read him and recognize that he was bad news cover to cover. I am confident that if I had my eyes open during the previous meetings, that what I was seeing subconsciously would have registered and I would not have put myself on the X with J/2. And, unfortunately, that X is getting bigger everyday which is precisely why today's officers *must* receive this training. As it has happened before, and will likely happen again, eventually our luck will run out. Being prepared, therefore, is the only option.