European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN): Next stop to an Agency?

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Abstract

European intelligence cooperation is the most important weapon in the fight against the new threats in the 28 EU member states. The article emphasizes the reasons that make the European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) move towards an independent operational agency into the EU mechanism. Even though, effective intelligence cooperation is hard to achieve even at the national level as different services compete for resources and attention from the decisions makers, past terrorist incidents in Europe served as a wake up for the European Commission to promote intelligence-sharing and cooperation among EU institutions and Member States.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War more than 20 years ago created a world in which the relatively stable between the two superpowers has disappeared. During the Cold War, a country's every action was conducted in the light of the adversary relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. On 9/11 the international community was introduced to a new type of terrorism, one that was truly global in its organization and impact. In both the European Union, the United States and Asia, it was immediately clear that an effective response would require new levels of intelligence cooperation in order to confront new threats such as extremism, illegal migration, human and illicit trafficking, radical Islamic networks, transnational organized groups and terrorism.

The post-September 11, 2001, and following terrorist acts in Madrid (2004), London (2005) and Burgas (2012) in Bulgaria has challenged governments, policy-makers, religious leaders, the media and the general public to play both critical and constructive roles in the war against international terrorism and radical Islamic extremism.[1] As the intelligence community works its way into the

twenty-first century, it faces an unprecedented array of challenges. The chaotic world environment of the post-Cold War Era (Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS), Arab Spring, Syria, Libya and Ukraine crises, Euro-Zone financial crisis, Iran nuclear issue, and terrorism-organized crime groups) offers a wide range of different issues to be understood, and a variety of new threats to be anticipated. The rapidly developing Information Age presents a process that needs to be a joint intelligence partnerships which emphasizes the differences and grievances, and builds a future based upon the recognition that all face common threats, one that can effectively contained and eliminated only through a recognition of mutual interests and the use of multilateral alliances, strategies, and action.[2]

It is in this context the article highlights the reasons for a European Union Intelligence Agency; points out the role of the European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) towards a prospective independent operational agency into the European Union Mechanism; describes European intelligence networks in the last three decades towards intelligence-sharing on confronting global terrorism; focuses on post 9/11 new threats in the European Union with special emphasis on the Balkan and Mediterranean region and we conclude with the need for a substantial intelligence sharing between European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) and the 28 national intelligence services in the European Union.

European Union Intelligence Agency: Do we need it ?

The European Union as an entity has become an increasingly important factor in the European continent since the revival of the European Community through the Single European Act (SEA) signed in 1986. SEA is the official name for the 1992 program for the opening borders among the 28 EU member states.

However, the instability in the North Africa (Arab Spring) and Middle East region (Syria, and Iraq crises) has affected the security and border control of the EU member states by the huge flow of illegal immigrant to the shores of Spain, Italy and Greece. The European Union's interior and justice ministers were clearly reluctant to hand over any major national intelligence function to a European Commission at a time when ad hoc arrangements among the major national intelligence services in Europe - and with the United States – are recently in the forefront in the campaign against terrorism and radical Islamic extremism such as the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS).

The EU's interior and justice ministers did agree on closer collaboration on some security issues, and appointed a counterterrorism coordinator who is in charge of monitoring the work of EU Council in the field of counter-terrorism, coordinating the implementation of the EU counter-terrorism strategy, fostering better communication between European Union and United States and ensure that the EU plays an active role in the fight against terrorism. An important point of agreement was to "create a clearinghouse, where for the first time

investigating judges, police and intelligence services in the EU member states can direct information which becomes available in real time to all members," said a Commission spokesperson.[3]

Instead of the suggestion of Belgium and Austria to create a European Union Intelligence Agency in order to fight international terrorism, the interior ministers from top five European states – Britain, Germany, France, Spain and Italy – were unwilling to agree on how to share intelligence with all EU member states and other nations.[4]

From Joint Situation Centre (SitCen) to Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN)

European Union Intelligence Center (INTCEN) jointed the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2010, but it has a far longer history. Its origins, as "a structure working exclusively on open source intelligence (OSINT)", lie in the Western European Union (WEU), an intergovernmental military alliance that officially disbanded in June 2011 after its function were gradually transferred over the last decade to the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).[5]

In 2012 INTCEN's predecessor organization was established as a directorate of the General Secretariat of the EU Council and given the name EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN). Staff from seven Member States' (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) intelligence services were seconded to the center and started to exchange sensitive intelligence as part of an "insider club" made up of intelligence analysts from the seven member's states.[6]

In 2007, the EU Joint Situation Centre's (SitCen) ability to analyze situations outside the European Union was strengthened by the establishment of the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), which pools civilian intelligence with that obtained by the European Union Military Staff's intelligence Division. SIAC provides "intelligence input to early warning and situation assessment", as well as "intelligence input to crisis response planning and assessment for operational and exercises."[7] The European Union Military Staff was transferred to the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2010 at the same time as EU Joint Situation Centre (SitCen), although the institutions themselves have not been merged.

In 2010, European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) became part of the EEAS (not yet an official EU body) and expanded to cover internal and external threats, and to allow for collection, processing, analysis, and sharing of classified information. Referring to the current mandate, the director of INTCEN, IIkka Salmi points out: "EU INTCEN'S mission is to provide intelligence analyses, early warning and situational awareness to the High Representative and to the European External Action Service (EEAS), to various EU decision

making bodies in the fields of the Common Security and Foreign Policy (CSFP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and Counter-Terrorism, as well as to the EU Member States. EU INTCEN does this by monitoring and assessing international events 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, focusing particularly on sensitive geographical areas, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other global threats."[8]

However, INTCEN has no formal mandate to collect intelligence as traditionally understood. The Centre relies mainly on open-source intelligence (OSINT) and information provided by the EU Member States, on a voluntary and "need to know" basis. Prior to 2012, INTCEN consisted of three main units:[9]

- The Civilian Intelligence Cell (CIC), which employed civilian analysts working on political and terrorism assessments;
- The General Operation Unit (GOU), which provided continuous operational support and non-intelligence research and analysis;
- The Communication Unit (CU), which ran the European Union's Council communication center.

In 2012, INTCEN restructured to improve its effectiveness and facilitate its focus on analysis with two main divisions:[10]

The Analysis Division (strategic analysis based on input from the EU Member States);

- The General and External Relations Division (legal and administrative issues, and open sources analysis (OSINT).

EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INTCEN) – New Structure

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<tr><td colspan="4">Director</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Director's Staff</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Analysis Division</td><td colspan="2">General and External Relations Division</td></tr>
<tr><td>Africa</td><td>Counter Terrorism</td><td rowspan="2">Policy, Requirements, Administration</td><td rowspan="2">Open Source Information Office</td></tr>
<tr><td>Western Balkans/CIS</td><td>Counter Proliferation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Asia</td><td rowspan="2">Global Issues/ Latin America</td><td rowspan="2">Consular Affairs</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
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Source: EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INTCEN) - European Union External Action Service (EEAS)

Today, INTCEN has its headquarters in Brussels (Belgium), and it employs around seventy persons that include twenty-four civilians and military background analysts. The analysts are seconded to INTCEN by their national intelligence services, as well as INTCEN employs European Union officials, temporary agents, and national experts from the security and intelligence community of the EU Member States. In addition, the INTCENT personnel has access to the European Union members' satellites, such as France's Helios and Pleiades, Germany's SAR-Lupe, Italy's Cosmo-Sky Med, and U.S. – owned commercial satellites. INTCENT receives diplomatic reports from the European Union 135 official delegations around the world, and classified intelligence from

the European Union's monitoring missions such as Georgia. But, INTCEN receives finished products from the EU Member States' intelligence services rather than raw intelligence.

Past and Present European Intelligence Sharing Networks: "Kilowatt, Megatonne, and the Berne Club"

In Europe, the war against global terrorism in the 1970s brought about two more institutional multilateral cooperation frameworks, Kilowatt, Megatonne and the Berne Club.

Kilowatt Network was the code-name for multilateral intelligence cooperation efforts among European states aimed at expanding the exchange of information in the fight against global terrorism.[11] Kilowatt was the first truly European intelligence forum, comprising representatives of intelligence services from UK, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland, Norway and Israel.

Megatonne intelligence network reported as a network for sharing intelligence on the activities of radical terrorists in Europe. Megatonne was sponsored by France and aimed at countering the threat of Islamic Algerian terrorists on the European mainland, activities that escalated in the early 1990s.[12] The Berne Club is a cooperation framework among Western European internal security services. It is based on periodic meetings attended by the heads of the European Intelligence Services. The Berne Club operates in an informal way, with meetings being conducted in different locations and organized by each country in turn. In recent years, meetings by the Berne Club have dealt with a range of internal security issues, including terrorism, illegal immigration, radical Islamic networks, and cross border forms of organized crime. Berne Club has analyzed past and present European intelligence cooperation framework.

Little publicity has been given to successful European security intelligence cooperation immediately preceding 9/11. In early 2001, intelligence indicators suggested that Osama bin Laden was planning a campaign of bomb attacks in Europe. Based on a well-functioned international exchange of information among the major security and intelligence services in Europe, a number of successful operations against persons within the bin Laden network were launched.[13] By mid-April 2001, a total of eighteen individuals had been apprehended in a series of coordinated operations across Europe. During some of these, weapons and chemical intended for the manufacture of explosives were seized. In other words, the long-established Berne Club was functionally fairly well.

Accordingly, following 9/11 the Berne Club created a new organization called the Counter-terrorist Group (CTG). This is a separate body with a wider membership of European Union intelligence Services together with the USA, Switzerland, and Norway.[14] Although CTG is not a European Union organization and reports through national security services to each capital, the national CTG rotates in

synchronization with the European Union Presidency and its threat analyses are made available to some high level European Union committees. At last, the Berne Club decided that CTG should play the major role in implementing intelligence-related aspects of the European Council's Declaration on Combating Terrorism that followed the attack on 11 March 2004 in Madrid, Spain.

Post 9/11 New Threats in the European Union: the Mediterranean and Balkan Perspective

In the twenty-first century, European Union faces new threats such as Illegal migration, Illicit Trafficking, Money-laundry, terrorism and transnational organized crime, extremism and Islamic networks that use the Mediterranean and Balkan region to transfer their activities to central and northern parts of the European Union member states. Global terrorism remains a vital threat to national and international security threats. There are several specific reasons why the terrorist threats will grow in the future. Western intelligence is increasingly concerned about the emerging national security threat of "jihadists returning home."[15] The quick advance of this "army of the devout" in Iraq, under the flag of the "caliphate," had given urgency to the task of trying to identify, track, and pinpoint the whereabouts of these western jihadists, especially when they decide to return to their respective countries of origin. The obvious fear is that these persons – indoctrinated, radicalized to the core and well trained in killing as part of doing their "holy work – will form terrorist cells inside Europe with the objective of causing as much as havoc as they can.[16] Routes of returning to home turf in order to commence terrorist action are well mapped. Perhaps the most obvious such avenue is the Turkey-Greece illegal migration highway. Turkey is increasingly sitting on the fence concerning the war in Syria, with the Turkish government silently sympathetic to the Muslim enemies of President Assad. This approach practically nullifies any thought about Turkish cooperation in tracking western jihadists traversing its territory.[17]

Arguably the most significant manifestation of the changing security agenda in the Balkan-Mediterranean region has been the continuous intensification and expansion of policing activities in and across the Mediterranean Sea, aimed at curbing illegal migration, human trafficking and other transnational challenges. Greece, Italy and Spain have deployed Coast Guards and military forces to prevent migration and cross-border crime. Moreover, law enforcement cooperation between Greece, Italy, Span and Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria has been intensified. While these measures are often officially justified both on security and humanitarian grounds, it seems clear that they have also increased the risks for the would-be immigrants, particularly by forcing them to take more dangerous routes. Such humanitarian arguments, however, obscure the fact that the very existence of the phenomenon of "boat people" is a problem of the Mediterranean states' own making: it is the consequence of their increasingly

strict immigration, visa and asylum policies, making clandestine entry practically the only possibility to enter (primarily via Turkey) the European Union member states.[18]

Tentative Conclusion

Intelligence cooperation is the most important weapon in the battle to contain the new threats (illegal migration, human trafficking, transnational organized crime and terrorism, foreign jihadist networks and illicit trafficking) in the European Union member states, but its significance is even greater than that. The first few years of the twenty-first century have witnessed a change in the role of secret intelligence in international politics. Intelligence and security issues are now more prominent than ever in Western political discourse as well as the wider public consciousness. Much of this can be attributed to the shock of the terrorist acts in New York (2001), Madrid (2004), London (2005), Oslo (2011) and Burgas (2012) in Bulgaria.

In our insistence on the concept of the "world order", we do not view international relations solely as the struggle for power between competing states or the consequences for the international system of the distribution of power between states; but rather, as suggested by Hedley Bull,[19] as a relationship between order and anarchy in a more fundamental sense. This means that international relations must be viewed from a perspective of values, which considers interpretation of morality, freedom, justice, civilization and individuality in an understanding of the relationship between law and power on the national as well as the international level.

By placing emphasis on order, the intention is to focus on levels below (transnational figures of identification) as well as beyond state level (the regional level, but for instance conceptions of the Western, the Islamic and the Arab world), and to examine their significance in terms of regional relations, and finally, the interaction between regional circumstances and non-governmental actors (such as Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, jihadist networks and so on). Across a range of post-Cold War issues, globalization has undermined many of the familiar mechanisms by which states formerly provided their populations with security. With the erosion of the familiar national border post, states have turned the more proactive measures to protect their populations, and these efforts are more intelligence-led.[20]

With little doubt, the European Union should establish a permanent EU Intelligence Agency, particularly because the international order has changes dramatically in the last few years and has not made the world more stable. The eastern (Ukraine crisis) and southern (illegal migration/human trafficking/ Islamic networks) periphery of Europe are regions with considerable instability. And the European Union has consequently become more active in the international arena. A lack of knowledge about other potential conflicts in the

region could be more costly than maintaining a viable EU intelligence structure. The current environment in the southeast Europe is less benign with multiple sources of insecurity. Societies across the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Arab Spring, Libya, Syria crisis, Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS), energy security in the Mediterranean Sea) are experiencing rapid political and economic changes. For the foreseeable future, security agendas in the Balkan and Mediterranean states will be driven to a considerable extent by internal security concerns.

In this context, the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) needs to be strengthened in order to be able to effectively perform its tasks on counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism, establishing them as the single point of contact at the European level in these perspective areas. In the next decade, INTCEN could become an intelligence agency gathering information from the European Union members' intelligence community and analyzing independently. Even though, effective intelligence cooperation is hard to achieve even at the national level as different services compete for resources and attention from the decisions makers, past terrorist incidents in Europe served as a wake up for the European Commission to promote intelligence-sharing and cooperation among EU institutions and 28 Member States.

At the end, intelligence profession is at a watershed in its intellectual history. For nearly a hundred years, the focus of intelligence operations had remained unchanged.[21] The categories of information required for national states and the analysis of civilian and military capabilities and intentions were largely the same in 1909 and 2014. In the twenty-first century, intelligence work promises to be fundamentally different. If so, an evolutionary approach toward the training of intelligence personnel and the development, as well as institutions of collection methods and systems – even toward the process of analysis itself –will no longer suffice to assure timely and accurate intelligence about the threats ahead.

Endnotes

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