

## **“Some thoughts on Open Source”**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First I would like to tell you how much I appreciate the opportunity being offered to me today to address such a distinguished assembly of knowledgeable people in Open Source issues.

Purpose of my presentation today is to provide you with a report, or perhaps with some new thoughts on Open Source activities.

I would like to deal with following points:

1. Why Open Source information ?
2. Sequence of events and necessities in connection with the intelligence cycle.
3. Evaluation of Open Source information.
4. Problems and examples.
5. Summary.

### **To point 1:**

#### **Why Open Source information ?**

Open Source information (OSINF) can be defined as publicly available information as well as other unclassified information, that has limited public distribution or access to it. It comes in print, electronic or oral form. It can be found distributed either to the mass public by print- or electronic media or to a much more limited customer base like companies, experts or specialists of some kind including the so called grey literature.

During the existence of the “Iron-Curtain” and the “Berlin-Wall” access to OSINF was very limited and restricted.

At that time first on the agenda as reconnaissance targets were military and politics. The question of early warning (advanced knowledge and indication of warning) then was decisive.

With discontinuation of the above mentioned frontiers, with Internet and the beginning of globalization as well as “Explosion of Information” and within the bounds of possibilities a huge amount of Open Source information was accessible to the public (almost to

everyone). But at the same time the costs of Open Source material were rising. The new free press products from the east have adapted to the western price level very quickly.

Nevertheless the collection of Open Source information seems to be a cost effective opportunity to obtain necessary information at the right time.

But also new threats to security policy in today's strategic environment like terrorism, organized crime, migration, illegal dealing in weapons, drug dealing, environmental damage, competition for vital resources such as water/oil, regional and international conflicts, ask for new and improved methods to get the necessary information.

Especially the significance of multinational operations within UN/OSCE mandates or humanitarian relief missions has increased. But internationality means information-sharing as well. Operations other than war become more and more important. These military and non-military risks are often difficult to analyze.

To us as a member of the European Union this means, that we have to take responsibility for managing a crisis in all its dimensions also including the military dimension.

International missions like Peace Support Operations in support of an UN/OSCE mandate need clear information in the preparatory phase as well as during the continuance of the operation.

Detailed Information-sharing arrangements between the participating nations are of great importance.

The acquisition of OSINT during an international operation to prevent conflicts in the zone of mission has to be handled carefully in order not to lose the confidence of the disputing parties.

In the sense of Force protection these engagements of military troops in an "out of area" peace support operation mean a new challenge to obtain foresighted information. With help of OSINT valuable and fundamental important decision making information (material) can also be delivered.

The value of Open Source information will obviously depend on the nature of the society in question. In open societies a lot of open sources will be available with facts on political, military, financial

and economical affairs. In closed societies, however, much less information will be available. Print and broadcast media will be subject to state control and propaganda.

In that case Open Source helps to be the foundation for establishing a more efficient classified collection plan. Or perhaps Open Source information is just “good enough” to answer a given question.

In brief, Open Sources are not always a substitute for a classified collection, but they provide a valuable foundation and a context for the analyst or the consumer and play a vital role for a further search out.

### **To point 2:**

#### **Sequence of events and necessities in connection with the intelligence cycle.**

Starting with “information-need” by the respective end user as political, military or other state run decision-makers, the analyst will lay down relevant intelligence requirements (request for information). They can be long-term, medium-term or actual intelligence requirements. This “information-need” will be discussed in close cooperation between analyst and collector. Already known information, deadlines and priorities etc. have to be announced to the collector.

Only in connection with investigation and analyses of the intelligence requirement and in regard to the sort, quantity and quality of the desired information, an exact arrangement of “what do I want to know” permits an optimal decision making process.

In regard to search for information through open sources, an obtaining order goes to the researcher. An obtaining schedule for open sources will also be fixed and includes task, priority, deadline, nature and the number of available open sources. This schedule also will keep the results on record.

At the same time this obtaining schedule serves the purpose to optimize the future research and also remains as basis for a new, better and faster research in open sources. This sounds very much to

create bureaucracy but in reality does mean to have a valuable overall view which lets an organisation work much more efficient.

The better the “collection management” the better results concerning OSINT are to be expected.

After the first results are in and after a first examination/valuation by the researcher, the analyst has to introduce his feedback. Feedback in that case does mean a statement by the analyst concerning usefulness, quality, quantity as well as completeness of the collected information in regard to the needed information. Punctuality of a given deadline has also to be valued. This method does make sense and optimizes and improves respectively increases sophistication for other and following researches.

### **To point 3**

#### **Evaluation of OSINT**

The permanent evaluation of OSINT is an essential part in the ongoing intelligence cycles. The key to success is a quick and continuous adjustment of collecting information in any fast-changing environment, through rapid source evaluation and data validation.

These occurrences of valuation have to be carried out by both the analyst and the searcher, but also from a point of view of the respective consumer.

These validated data, together with open source intelligence put into electronic databases can then be searched quickly to check if information in what quality and quantity already exists. Full citation of all original sources should be registered to ensure that good sources at a given time can be checked and used again.

Only in this way and together with an information management a previously demanded/defined information-need structured by sort, quality, quantity, time and user, can be searched for, found and optimized put at disposal. But also an already done standardization of regular OSINT-reports has to be subject to the above mentioned process. OSINT has to be flexible orientated on respective structures and projects.

Objectivity is an essential task to transfer information into action. It asks for a possible use of different sources and also to make a distinction between primary- and secondary sources on specific topics.

Evaluation guarantees that "Color", manipulation, dependencies and disinformation by these open sources will be recognized on time and also will be cataloged. Specific special contents by the Internet have to be carefully analyzed.

Continuity, experience and knowledge make great demands on people, which are responsible for evaluation.

As CLAUSEWITZ already found out: "Leading a war is an art"; I believe that Open Source Intelligence is much more than a craft. The best collection manager is the one who "knows who knows".

#### **To Point 4:**

#### **Problems and Examples**

Information already has a determining influence in today's society. The fight for access to resources of information gets as important as the fight for water or oil.

But there are of course a lot of problems with Open Source collection and the whole use of OSINT. Information overload is not only a problem in dealing with open source, but also one of today's information society.

To avoid this problem and not to fill up the end-user with too much information it seems to be necessary to install a human filter and where possible a technical filter after collecting the information. In accordance to the consumer this human or technical filter has to examine if there exists too much information, not needed information, less valuable information and to remove such information, and which also avoids to pass on information of the same content.

Especially on the Internet we can find, among a huge amount of valuable information, a lot of useless information. To save time and expenses the process of scrutinizing information has to be done very carefully.

Next: If analysts or searchers are accustomed to certain internet addresses, an attack by hackers on parts of the internet might also become a problem for regular and punctual searching.

This happened to [www.serbia-info.com](http://www.serbia-info.com), a news bulletin of the Serbian Government, which was blocked by hackers for two days.

But anyway there is another problem: Since the introduction of the new media-law 1998 in Serbia more than 30 kinds of media were fined to pay a total of 2 million dollars.

During the last month the Serbian authorities continuously did shut down media outlets critical of the government. This is an attempt to take control of all open sources of information.

Disinformation is another problem. Therefore again it is important that open sources on a systematic basis are critically assessed for accuracy. Full citation of all original sources in OSINT is important to enable the analyst and the end user to know, where the information has its origin. For example the following foil will show you the importance of a good open source care.

Nearly 80 % of a certain topic concerning the Kosovo conflict could be obtained by OSINT. It was particularly important to check on these OSINT-Sources before drawing up a relevant report. Sometimes this has to happen again in retrospective to compare the quality of old Open Sources with new ones.

One short notice on employees who are working on Open Sources:

Only well trained and highly motivated personnel reaches the necessary quality. An optimal selection of personnel as well as a good personnel management is essential to the cause.

Staff rotation can be another method to improve quality and creativity.

By choosing external applicants like militia officers or further personnel quality has also priority before quantity. This is also an opportunity for outsourcing research on sources in different foreign languages.

**To point 5:****Summary:**

Summarizing I would like to emphasize that the use of Open Sources as well as Open Source Intelligence, which is derived from it, ever since has been used to gain information.

Probably I could quote the bible, 4<sup>th</sup> book Moses, chapter 13 verse 1 - 45 "God told Moses: send out some men to scout Canaan...." Among other things after 40 days these men brought back vine and grapes.

If, at that time, this was an explicit open source for intelligence activity might be questionable, but it was an essential gathering of information by travelers. The experiences of travelers in foreign countries, journalists, academics or other experts are still very interesting sources for OSINT.

And now back to today:

Right now during the information age it is essential for this kind of intelligence gathering to permanently improve and further develop it. Only by a constant improvement and a continuous development the quality of Open Source Intelligence can be guaranteed.

Burden sharing has to be discussed. Events and seminars, exactly like this one by Robert Steele, are therefore valuable and make it possible to update "Open Source thinking" as well as networking with specialists.

Our aim always has to be to provide Open Source Intelligence support in order to facilitate the decision making and planning process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes my presentation.

# OSS 21 PRIMER Essential Elements of Information Joint Planning, Operations Other Than War and Open Source Intelligence - Link Page

[Previous](#)      [OSS '00 John Crow CA NIPC International Open Source Realities,](#)

[Next](#)      [OSS '00 Brigadier General Wolfgang Mueller Austria, Some Thoughts on Open Source \(Slides\),](#)

[Return to Electronic Index Page](#)