



**(U//FOUO) 'SIGINT Curmudgeon' Excited By SCO-FEST**

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*(C) Senior Collection Officers (SCOs) from Second Party countries gather to compare notes, work toward closer collaboration.*

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(U//FOUO) SIGINT Curmudgeons rarely get excited about anything. We usually walk around humphing and grumphing, bemoaning the fate of the collection field and starting sentences with: "Back when we did real SIGINT...!". However, after attending SCO-FEST #1, held at NSAW on 10 January, my excitement is barely containable!

(C) The SCO-FEST was a shared vision of [REDACTED], Chief of GSOC (the GCHQ\* SIGINT Operations Centre), and [REDACTED] (aka "Papa SCO"), [NSOC](#) SCO Desk coordinator, to bring together the collection elements of the five-eyes operations centers and their RSOCs/Cryptologic Centers to energize the SCO community. Closer communications among the five partners and with our Cryptologic Centers will allow us to exploit the diversity of outlook and experience that exist in our extended enterprise. We originally wanted to have the conference late last summer, but various events caused it to be postponed until now. It was worth the wait.

(C) Attendees consisted of:

- GCHQ representatives (including GSOC SCOs),
- a CSE\* representative,
- a GCSB\* representative,
- a HSOC (Hawaii Security Operations Center) representative,
- NSOC SCOs, and
- a [CSRC](#) representative.

(C) Papa SCO and [REDACTED] jointly presented "A Shared Vision" outlining the necessity of pooling our knowledge and resources to meet the increased challenges the GWOT\* and our ever-changing requirements will demand. Our ultimate goal is to transform the SIGINT collection community into "Five as One," by understanding each other's capabilities, establishing communications, agreeing on strategy, and testing/developing our partnerships. GCHQ personnel provided overviews of GSOC's structure and the duties/responsibilities of their SCO Desk. NSOC SCOs provided a similar overview of CSRC, NSOC and the SCO desk and the CSRC representative gave an overview of Mission Realignment as it concerns the SCOs.

(C) Of course, whenever you get a bunch of collectors together, the Educational Anecdotes (aka war stories!) flow freely and a lively discussion of how to recognize and solve collection problems ensues. This was no different. The discussions centered on how to share information on a shift-by-shift basis, the information-sharing tools available to us, and the need to quickly share threat information. The CSE representative shared that discussions are ongoing regarding the future of CANSOC (Canadian SIGINT Operations Centre). The decision to leave it as a watch office or upgrade it to an Operations Center will probably be made early this year. The discussions were animated and all parties were obviously enthusiastic. The main themes of the discussions were communications and cooperation.

(C) It was unanimously agreed not to wait a year for the next SCO-FEST. Both HSOC and GCHQ volunteered to host SCO-FEST 2 in approximately six months, or toward the end of summer. HSOC would probably be the best choice as it is more convenient for DSD\* and GCSB. We were agreed that it was essential to get the word out early to allow everyone time to plan. In addition to representatives from the 5-eyes watch and/or operations centers (or centres!), representatives from the Cryptologic Centers, RAF Digby, and the other Second Party

Cryptologic Center equivalents would be invited and encouraged to attend. There is no doubt that we collectors, and collection managers could easily spend two or three days discussing 24/7 collection strategies and hammering out new and streamlined ways of working together.

(U//FOUO) For all of us who attended, I think this was an exciting meeting. For me in particular, it was very satisfying. I have been fairly pessimistic about the future of the collection field at NSA. Any collector who is ambitious and anxious for advancement (and that is certainly a natural desire) has to keep one foot outside the collection field. My perception is advancement is limited for those who stay in collection and are doing collection jobs. Seeing and hearing the enthusiasm for the collection field as evidenced by the attendees, gives me hope we can use the involvement of the Second Parties to reinvigorate the collection field at NSA make it a vibrant contributing career field for the 21st century.

(U//FOUO) This SCO-FEST experience almost makes me want to turn in my SIGINT Curmudgeon union card. Almost, but not quite! It was very refreshing though, to work with other collectors who share the same enthusiasm for collection and are as outspoken in their support of the field as I am. Now back when we did real SIGINT...!

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(U) Notes:

GCHQ = the UK's Government Communications Headquarters

CSE = Canada's Communications Security Establishment

GCSB = New Zealand's Government Communications Security Bureau

GWOT = Global War on Terrorism

DSD = Australia's Defence Signals Directorate

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