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The Role of Analysis
in Combating
Modern Terrorism



By
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JUL 15 1989

ACQUISITIONS

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is one of the few law enforcement organizations in the United States which has created a full-time unit for the purpose of combating terrorism. Los Angeles has become an international city with almost every religion, philosophy, cause, ethnic group, and special interest group represented, including those individuals or groups who espouse terrorism. The concern over the potential dangers to the citizens of Los Angeles, as a result of this situation, has been instrumental in the creation of not only the LAPD's Anti-Terrorist Division but also the Los Angeles Task Force on Terrorism (LATFOT). The latter is a multijurisdictional organization consisting of members from the LAPD's Anti-Terrorist Division, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These organizations have

constitutes terrorist activity. Similar guidelines are quickly becoming the norm for other major law enforcement agencies that engage in intelligence gathering relating to terrorism.

Within the LAPD, the Anti-Terrorist Division is composed of four sections—Surveillance, Investigative, Legal, and Intelligence Analysis. It is, however, the Analysis Unit, staffed by sworn personnel, which is credited with placing the division on the leading edge of innovative techniques in the battle against terrorism. The duties of the Analysis Unit include preparing the following:

- Threat assessments—Operations-oriented reports containing information on major events, visiting dignitaries, planned demonstrations, and other activities which may be targeted for terrorist activities.

ultimately affect the City of Los Angeles.

- Intelligence analysis—Translating intelligence data into meaningful investigative conclusions for effective case management.

However, of these four main duties, it is intelligence analysis which has become the most important function of the Analysis Unit. Intelligence analysis is the key factor between an intelligence unit which performs to the peak of its ability and one which merely functions as a file unit.

The Analysis Mission

Terrorist acts, as defined by the guidelines governing ATD, are: Unlawful actions which can reasonably be expected to result in death, serious bodily injury, or significant property damage and which are intended to have such results to further societal objectives, to influence societal action, or to harass on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. With this definition in mind, analysis can be described as the examination of raw intelligence data that enables the analyst to uncover possible terrorism trends and provide appropriate investigative management.

Analysis gives meaning and direction to intelligence information. Usually, an intelligence investigator will provide raw information for the analyst to process and compare to existing data. The analyst's goal is to fill investigative gaps and make suggestions for additional investigative steps. An analyst will also use provided information to make decisions concerning the current and future effects of terrorist

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combined their resources to counteract local terrorist activities and to track national and international terrorist trends.

The LAPD's Anti-Terrorist Division (ATD) was created in 1983 and functions under rigid, court-imposed guidelines. These guidelines established procedures for qualifying individuals or groups for investigation based upon a strict definition of what

- Officer safety bulletins—Interdepartmental memos regarding terrorist threats, such as new weapons or tactics, which reflect directly on the police officer working the street.
- Briefing papers—Reports covering key world and national situations involving terrorism, which could

group movements and activities. This procedure is known as trend analysis. When an investigator receives information back from an analyst, the processed data can then be used to make management decisions regarding specific investigative operations and targets and to follow up on newly developed leads.

While the activities of each intelligence function are dependent on one another for support, the overall responsibilities of investigators and analysts are distinct. The analyst is tasked with looking beyond specific cases to find similarities and differences in many different investigations, while the investigator focuses on individual leads and details of gathering information.

Another analytical function is to disseminate properly information produced by the unit. To achieve this, analysts prepare formal intelligence analysis reports. These reports form the basis for the final intelligence product. Often, this information will be transmitted orally to an investigator, but it is still essential that information of this nature be documented for future reference.

An analyst's success in these areas can be enhanced by developing a rapport with the case investigators. By showing an interest in a caseload and then providing a useful analysis product, the analyst will build trust and confidence with his investigative counterparts and facilitate a two-way flow of information.

The Analysis Process

In traditional crime solving, the functions of investigation and analysis are rarely considered sep-

arate actions. When assigned a case, an investigator constantly develops ideas about how the crime was committed and who committed the crime. As the detectives proceed, they analyze these ideas, discarding those which do not fit in with the evidence accumulated while developing others. However, in an intelligence unit, analysis is a distinct and separate procedure which is most effective when handled on a full-time basis by trained personnel.

A simple description of analysis can be arrived at by comparing analysis to assembling a jigsaw puzzle. First, all the pieces of the puzzle, or as many as are available, are gathered together. This compares to the function of compiling raw intelligence data. Next, the puzzle pieces are organized most effectively by identifying borders, an action comparable to establishing the parameters of an investigation. Once this is accomplished, other recognizable pieces can be put into place. This action relates to the analysis function of identifying terrorist cell

groups, leadership, funding, philosophy, and other recognizable factors.

The next step in putting together a puzzle is one of the most important. Without a picture from which to work, a hypothesis is formed regarding what the picture will reveal. This will help locate the proper position for other puzzle pieces. As applied to analysis, a hypothesis is a hunch or educated guess formed from pieces of information at hand, which will create a flexible basis for furthering the investigation. The more pieces of a puzzle that are placed in their proper positions, the greater the chance of identifying the entire picture.

Even when the picture appears to be near completion, an analyst must be careful not to force a conclusion or become overly adamant. A hypothesis may not always be completely correct, but it should be based on the evidence at hand and include sound logic and practicality. Practical judgments of this nature will generate investigative leads and provide a basis for case management.

Chief Gates



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The process of analysis is becoming increasingly important in modern law enforcement's battle against terrorism.
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To make the comparison of analysis to puzzle construction even closer, consider taking three puzzles, mixing all the pieces together, removing half the pieces, and then trying to construct the puzzles without referring to the pictures on the puzzle boxes. This example comes the closest to the

established analytical hypotheses and other factual information. This comparison is the most important step in the procedure, as it is through this function that "meaning" is derived from all the summarized information. During this step, the analyst must constantly be asking, "What is significant?"

ligence analysis report should be completed to explain the information and bring it to the attention of the concerned investigator. Thus, the explaining step of the analysis process begins.

This explanation should include whether information gathered showed any significant relationships; the meaning, or lack of meaning, of those relationships; the "big picture" of the findings in terms of terrorist trends; and any requests, requirements, or suggestions for further investigative steps. The analyst then needs to receive feedback from the investigator as to the value of the analytical insights and the results of investigative follow-up.

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... intelligence analysis makes the difference between an intelligence unit which merely files information and one that uses gathered information efficiently and effectively against terrorist elements.
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actual task facing an intelligence analyst. However, by learning the proper analysis techniques, an analyst can become skilled in assembling information into a clear pattern and in defining the areas which are most important to the investigation.

Summarizing

A closer look at the analysis process shows that it can be separated into three steps—summarizing, comparing, and explaining. The summarizing process consists of combining all available source information, including investigator input, open source materials, department records, etc. This process assists the analyst in eliminating data which may be of marginal value.

Comparing

Following the summarizing process, new data are compared with previously gathered information to see how it fits with already-

and "What does this indicate?" By comparing summarized information to an already-established hypothesis (a hunch or strong guess as to the outcome of the case being investigated), an analyst can quickly see how the hypothesis is affected by new information. In other words, does the information support the original hypothesis, or does the analyst need to adjust the hypothesis to support the new evidence?

There will be many frustrating times when the analyst will be unable to logically compare the gathered information and the hypothetical explanations. When this happens, existing data should be reexamined more thoroughly, or further information sought, to clarify the unknown.

Explaining

Once a thorough comparison has been made, and new leads or facts relating to a specific case have been discovered, an intel-

The information an analyst processes should not be limited to police sources only. To fill previously identified investigative gaps, analysts must make use of open-source material such as daily newspapers, targeted group publications, and other pertinent periodicals. Open-source information is often extremely valuable in providing general insight into a group or individual's philosophy, activities, and plans. To read open-source information effectively, analysts must be cognizant of the needs of the investigations for which they are responsible and constantly look for new applications which the material may provide.

With the information received from reading various sources, analysts should begin to identify general group membership and leadership positions by using flow charts (graphs showing a simple timeline of incident occurrences), link charts (graphs detailing the connections between related persons

and/or incidents), and other visual case representations. Coupled with updated hypotheses, these analytical procedures will assist in identifying changes and developments as the investigation proceeds. Link, VIA (Visual Investigative Analysis), time-line, and other visual representations can often provide valuable information and insight for the investigators working on a specific case.

The intelligence analyst must work closely with the assigned case investigator. This requires teamwork in all aspects of the case. The analyst must maintain credibility by providing accurate, logical, and utilitarian information to the investigator. Additionally, flexibility must be exercised when presenting unproven hypotheses and theories. Conclusions that are arrived at via the analytical process should not be forced onto the investigator who may be pursuing a different direction in the case. Time and the addition of further information will prove or disprove the analyst's hypotheses.

Practical Analysis Applications

To outsiders, terrorism can appear to be a senseless, random activity without purpose, direction, or possibility of prediction. However, for those involved in the detection, prevention, and analysis of terrorism, it is clear that the opposite is true. In most cases, terrorism is carried out by an organized group with a clear goal in mind and is therefore amenable to systematic analysis.

Terrorist attacks are not carried out or planned in a vacuum. Clues, significant indicators, and other types of evidence can be uncovered before, during, and

after terrorist actions. The key is in being able to analyze this evidence and provide a course of action. This will enable management decisions to be made regarding preventive or reactive courses of action to preclude future terrorist attacks by individuals or groups.

For a new intelligence unit member tasked with analyzing the actions of a terrorist group which may have been in existence for a decade or more, the first step to be taken should be to read, read, and read some more. The analyst must be thoroughly familiar with the history of the case and the current progress of the investigation.

The next step for the newly assigned analyst is to begin breaking down all of the gathered intel-

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Analysis gives meaning and direction to intelligence information.
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ligence and available open-source information into component parts to identify organizational leadership, current and past membership, group philosophy, prior terrorist actions, methods of operation, and stated goals. By organizing the information in this manner, a large case, with many diverse elements, can be formed into an understandable and manageable entity. Once the case is organized, an analyst can begin to look into capabilities of the group and begin to assess current potential for terrorism.

An analyst should then begin to track the actions of the terrorist group's current membership using charting techniques to discover leadership, movement, stated goals, and philosophical changes. This information, combined with an assessment of the group's capabilities, should provide the analyst with enough input to start analyzing and predicting the target group's current status and possible future actions. Investigative deficiencies, possible trends, and new leads which are uncovered should be brought to the attention of the intelligence investigator through the previously discussed intelligence analysis report.

Conclusion

The process of analysis is becoming increasingly important in modern law enforcement's battle against terrorism. The analyst's role in this battle has expanded to the point where it has become a major element in ensuring the success of an intelligence investigation. This is achieved by encouraging teamwork between the analyst and the investigator. As the investigator gathers information, the analyst provides an overall picture of the case and assists in interpreting the meaning of disparate pieces of information. Above all, analysis provides a solid basis for case management decisions. The ultimate result is that intelligence analysis makes the difference between an intelligence unit which merely files information and one that uses gathered information efficiently and effectively against terrorist elements.

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