

# The Uses of Intelligence

Every staff member is a vital part of the network

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Most recent events in Federal prisons that resulted in the thwarting of inmate plans for escape, drug trafficking, gang activity, or assaults did not occur by chance. Staff were able to avoid these serious incidents as the result of effective intelligence operations.

Conducting routine intelligence operations has long been accepted as vital in military operations and national security programs. Recently, law enforcement officials have found that the establishment of "criminal intelligence units" has made a major contribution to the overall effectiveness of their organizations. Prison officials, too, are learning that, in their rapidly changing correctional environment, strategic planning is of paramount value in forging a response to security threats posed by inmates who possess extraordinary resources and skills. A critical element in planning for and managing these threats is intelligence—the foreknowledge required to recognize the nature of the threat, and the capacity to make informed decisions with regard to security management.

## What is intelligence?

For the purposes of this discussion, "intelligence" in the correctional environment is "selectively processed information that is of strategic value in making informed decisions regarding security management." Listed below are three underlying assumptions regarding high-quality intelligence operations.

*Intelligence gathering and use are not restricted to highly trained technicians.* Effective intelligence operations can actually consist of commonsense observations regarding security threats. Informed decisions

regarding housing assignments, job assignments, or security precautions for medical trips can be made based on this information. On a larger scale, projected needs for helicopter deterrence, for high security bedspace, and similar issues confronting corrections professionals can be determined based on effective intelligence operations.

*Intelligence operations must be conducted in accordance with normal policies and procedures.* Intelligence operations must absolutely comply with constitutional requirements, statutes, and policy and procedural guidelines. Policy should be developed to address all elements of the intelligence process; audit guidelines should be developed to measure compliance and aid in program review.

*Once you have established a good intelligence collection plan, and have properly staffed the operation with competent, productive, ethical professionals, you have not met all of the base requirements for a good intelligence operation.* Don't confuse activity with action. Without evaluation, collation, skillful analysis, and appropriate dissemination, collected intelligence is of little importance. Once analyzed, intelligence must flow back to the field. *Strategic* intelligence must be placed in the hands of strategic decisionmakers. *Operational* intelligence must be fed into the actual investigative process. Intelligence operations require time and commitment to mature into an integral element of correctional management. Such operations soon become indispensable in facing today's emerging security threats.

## The need for intelligence

One of the controlling factors in the growing acceptance of intelligence operations is simply "compelling need." The flourishing drug trade in the United

States has sharply accelerated the growth of new drug-related organized crime groups, such as Jamaican Posses, Crips, Bloods, and similar domestic street gangs. This is coupled with a tremendous surge of violent activity by Colombian drug cartels, as well as Southeast Asian cartels, tongs, and triads. Sharply increased Federal prosecutorial activity, and similar initiatives by other law enforcement agencies, have resulted in the percentage of inmates serving sentences for drug-related offenses climbing from 16 percent to nearly 50 percent in the last 15 years.

This "new" type of inmate often enters prison with advanced technological skills in illicit communications, computers, security electronics, explosives fabrication, paramilitary tactics, and automatic weaponry. Of even greater concern, particularly with the drug cartels, is the specter of extraordinary levels of outside tactical and logistical support. Defense against outside assault and the use of helicopters in support of escape efforts must now be considered in security planning.

Aside from managing inmates with increased skills and resources, we are now bracing for what has been projected as a virtual 100-percent increase in inmate population over the near term. This dramatic increase in numbers dictates a need for increased intelligence regarding inmate groupings.

Coupled with the sharp increases in numbers and sophistication is the decrease in the traditional intelligence that used to be routinely provided regarding inmates. A byproduct of the recent change in Federal sentencing guidelines

tor to private sector companies, offering assembly or component parts for their manufactured goods, similar to the subcontracting option mentioned earlier. The difference is that there would be no requirement for the finished products to be sold to the Federal Government.

The benefits are similar to some of those noted earlier. FPI would develop partnerships with the private sector, and dependence on mandatory sales to the Government would be reduced. FPI would have an accessible expanded market, would not compete for sales with the private sector, and would provide low-cost labor perhaps not available domestically. However, as with the other subcontracting option, there may be concerns about displacement of services and component goods offered by companies using domestic labor.

■ *Competing in a totally open market*— This is the most extreme option for FPI growth. Under this option, FPI could sell products to anyone. Almost two-thirds of State prison industries have an unrestricted market; to date these prison industries have not been seen as a serious threat to U.S. business.

The benefits are obvious. It creates a much larger market and provides the greatest opportunity for FPI to meet its growth needs without competing with the private sector for the Government market.

The danger is that FPI would have to be much more price-, and therefore cost-reduction, oriented. As mentioned, the program aspects of FPI have built-in inefficiencies that require some assurance of sales. To be truly competitive in an

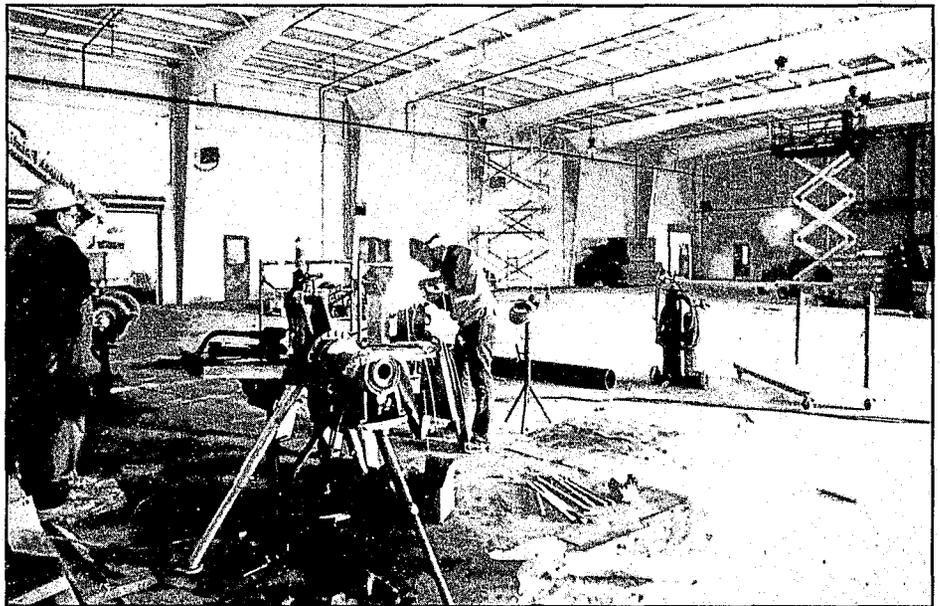
open market would mean making decisions that are more business- and efficiency-oriented, and possibly changing the makeup of operations to a degree that would undermine the original mission of FPI.

### Conclusion

FPI is facing tremendous growth needs. It will be difficult to grow at the rate

sufficient level of business to keep inmates employed. However, developing new markets without the use of a mandatory source would reduce the need for FPI growth to focus on its traditional Government market.

For the future, if mandatory source protection were maintained for sales to the Government, if product development guidelines were used for expanding sales



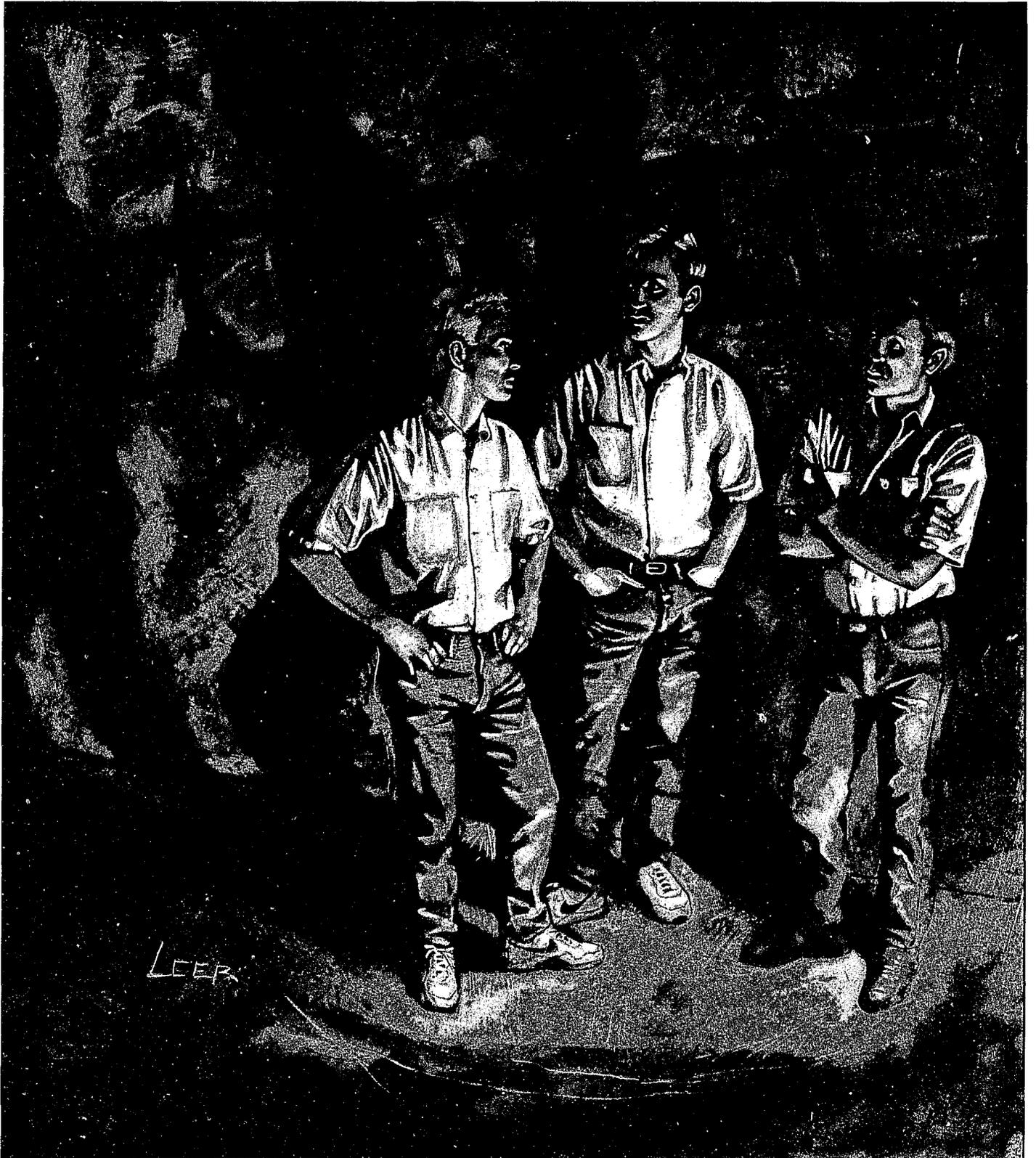
*Federal Prison Industries must grow steadily over the next few years to keep pace with the projected growth in the inmate population.*

required, to find adequate markets for goods, to fund required capital expansion, and to keep FPI solvent during the process. Nevertheless, FPI is critical to the operation of safe, orderly prisons; it must be successful in this endeavor. As a correctional program, FPI must employ and train inmates, while being sensitive to the concerns of private industry.

This article has suggested some options to balance FPI growth with private sector concerns. The mandatory source provision for sales to the Federal Government must be maintained to ensure FPI a

in that market, and if other markets were opened without mandatory source protection, FPI would have an opportunity to meet its growth needs. Additionally, the private sector would be less affected by such growth, and perhaps would even benefit from partnerships with FPI. ■

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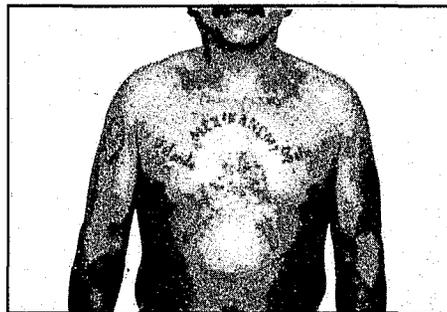
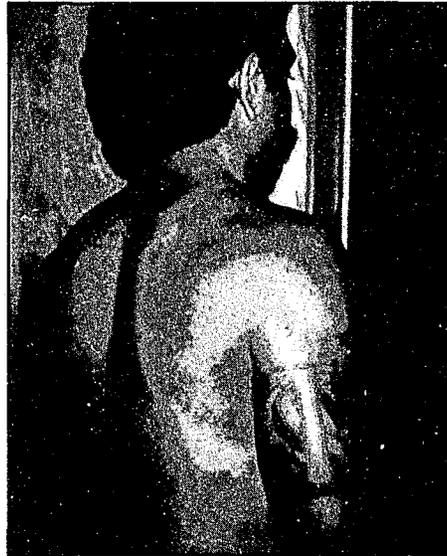
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has been the development of a matrix-style decisionmaking process regarding appropriate sentences, which has obviated the need for the court to have a detailed presentence investigation. The document of the investigation, frequently a valuable intelligence source regarding the inmate's skills, affiliations, and specific criminal activities, is largely lost to administrators, who must now find other ways of obtaining this information.

Improved intelligence is needed not only in daily operations, but in the strategic planning process. Budgetary constraints, political realities, the site acquisition process, and similar concerns must be considered when managing existing security assets and forecasting the need for additional institutions. Specifically, strategic intelligence helps establish a balance of institutions with features such as helicopter deterrence, perimeter breach deterrence, intrusion detection, and similar security systems.

Another integral element of the strategic planning process is staff training. Staff must be sensitized to emerging security threats and develop sight recognition skills to detect and deter them. This should not be an add-on program, but an integral element of the staff training program.

Finally, the contingency planning element of strategic planning must be adjusted to contemplate sophisticated threats, such as outside assault coordinated with outside hostage taking to effect the escape of highly sophisticated criminals. Modern contingency planning must also provide extremely well coordinated multiagency responses to terrorist incidents targeting prisons.



Clearly, the need for an effective response to the emerging security threats of the coming decade, together with the requirements for strategic planning, means that the days of simply inspecting locks and bars are gone. Intelligence, more than ever, is a critical element in the decisionmaking process.

### The mission of intelligence

Let's now consider the actual mission of intelligence operations in a prison. It is appropriate to review several key issues:

#### *Informed decisionmaking*

The capacity for informed decisionmaking is vital in managing security threat groups, or individual inmates who have advanced skills, such as computer expertise.

#### *Deterrence*

Prison officials need to perform proactive investigations and monitor such groups to detect and interdict emerging escape plots, drug introductions, planned violence, work and food strikes, and similar incidents well before they occur.

#### *Protection*

The mission of the Bureau of Prisons includes providing a safe, secure environment for inmates and staff while protecting the community. Reducing this philosophy to its lowest common denominator, inmate "incapacitation" contemplates the prevention of continued criminal conduct, either inside the institution or in the community, through correspondence, telephones, and visiting contacts. The courts and the community have the reasonable expectation that inmates will stop committing crimes once placed in prison. To achieve this end, prison officials must be provided with high-quality intelligence.

"Strategic intelligence." Much of the preceding discussion has involved what can be defined as "strategic intelligence." The identity of security threat groups, membership strength, their rules of membership, recruiting efforts, projected strength, recognition features such as the use of tattoos or symbolism, skill levels, preferred tactics, outside support, treaties, alliances, feuds with other groups, and similar forms of detailed information are all elements of useful strategic intelligence. In addition, foreknowledge of emerging threat groups—such as white supremacist groups—just entering the prosecution pipeline may be defined as strategic intelligence.

*“Operational Intelligence.”* In contrast, “operational intelligence” (termed tactical intelligence in law enforcement) involves informed knowledge of current or pending criminal activity, such as drug introduction/distribution, escapes, planned violence, etc. Operational intelligence is a critical element in the capacity to perform proactive, as opposed to purely reactive, investigations. This permits direct deterrence and interdiction of criminal activity and violence before such events occur.

## The intelligence process

The actual intelligence process can be broken down into five phases: collection, evaluation, collation, analysis, and dissemination.

### Collection

This phase encompasses a wide range of overt and covert collection plans. The vast majority of raw information is collected through “open sources” such as the news media, publications by security threat groups themselves or their opposition, court records, and specialized journals dealing with organized crime, terrorism, and similar issues. In a prison setting we also have the ability to easily gather “association” information—observations on whom an inmate eats with, walks with, recreates with, and so on. This may be of value in defining an inmate’s specific role in an illicit activity. Although frequently of significant value, intelligence collected via covert means (such as direct surveillance and authorized communications intercepts) represents only a portion of the total collection effort.



*Tattoos of three Mexican-American organizations. Above: La Nuestra Familia gang. Top left: Texas Syndicate gang. Bottom left: Mexikanemi society.*

### Evaluation

In simple terms, is the information collected credible and is the source reliable? Rumors and speculation may have their place, but should be clearly labeled as such. Rumors must be segregated from verified information derived from a credible, informed source.

### Collation

The collection and evaluation of information is of little value if it is not sorted, labeled, filed, and cross-indexed so that it is retrievable by a wide variety of current and future criteria. Therefore, collation is a vital step that directly facilitates the actual analysis. A vast collection of potentially useful information is of small use if it cannot be retrieved in a thorough, timely, and labor-effective manner.

### Analysis

Many have called the analysis function “the heart of the intelligence process.” In this step, the various bits and pieces of sometimes seemingly unrelated information are compared or sequenced in such a manner as to show pattern, linkage, and meaning. It is often useful to establish a hypothesis to help establish meaning; this may trigger an expanded collection plan for new pieces of information to test or mature the hypothesis.

### Dissemination

The preceding phases of the intelligence process will have little impact if the final intelligence product is not promptly distributed to those individuals who have need to know. This dissemination phase, in many ways, is the most labor-intensive, and is also frequently the most misunderstood. All the strategic value of operational intelligence can be lost if it is distributed so widely as to compromise an investigation in progress. Conversely, strategic intelligence must be distributed widely enough to aid staff in recognizing members of security threat groups and their activities. Another concept that tends to greatly affect dissemination decisions is “third party disclosure.” Many documents received from other agencies may not be directly reproduced and distributed. Instead, they must be used only as reference materials in producing an agency’s own intelligence documents.

The following case study will serve to illustrate the effectiveness of the process. In a fairly recent case at a U.S. penitentiary, “strategic intelligence” indicated that members of certain domestic terrorist groups were present in the population; specifically, one high-ranking member had been active in previ-

ous escape plots involving outside support. Existing intelligence indicated that his outside group was known to have access to heavy arms, explosives, and coordinated support from other domestic terrorist groups.

Operational intelligence, developed through a confidential informant and corroborated through various forms of surveillance, indicated that yet another violent escape attempt was in the planning stages, this time using a helicopter, supported by a coordinated assault on the perimeter and related targets in the community. Due to strategic intelligence developed prior to the case, an intelligence collection plan already covered the primary domestic terrorist group, as well as other groups known to be pledged to mutual-aid agreements.

Evaluation of the information used to develop the operational intelligence found it to be credible, based on direct observations and interagency intelligence. Collation and analysis of available information resulted in the dramatic hypothesis that members of at least two other groups would support the violent escape effort and possibly even participate. That is to say, based on what staff knew of the groups and the situation, more inmates should be involved. Who were they? To quickly test the hypothesis, and as a part of the active investigation, the collection plan was promptly expanded. Through direct surveillance, communications intercepts, and similar collection efforts, it was determined that at least three members of the suspected associate groups were involved.

The intelligence process worked. While it is true that line staff did not label their activities with the formal terms used in

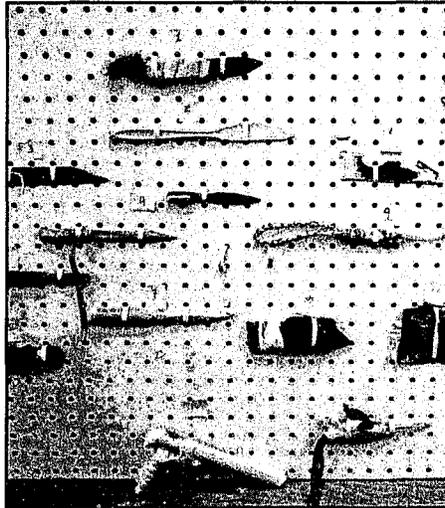
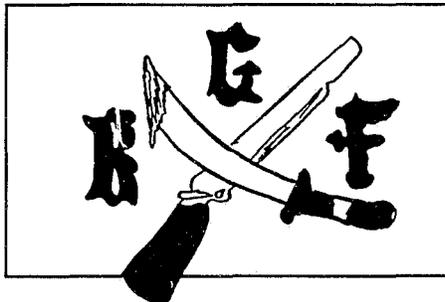


Photo courtesy U.S. Penitentiary, Marion, IL



this article, it is clear that the classic intelligence cycle was very effective, resulting in the prevention of the escape and the successful prosecution of the domestic terrorist leader and several associates. The logical and skillful application of the thought processes now being discussed as "intelligence" undoubtedly prevented grave injuries or loss of life, major destruction of Government property, and the future victimization of community members by those who would have escaped. Lessons learned in this case also had a significant impact on strategic planning for the institution involved, as well as the entire agency, in terms of helicopter deterrence, staff training, and investigative resources.

The preceding case study described not only the value of the hypothesis, but the value of "link analysis" concepts. In the

analysis phase, staff are looking for meaning through the examination of patterns, often involving highly specific interactions between individual inmates, groups to which they belong, and contacts in the community.

Before moving on, we must comment briefly on the concept of "counterintelligence." Extreme care must be taken to protect intelligence assets, interagency relationships, and confidential informants. Understand that those on whom you gather information are interested in what you know, how long you have known it, and who was your source. A basic element of counterintelligence is "counter-surveillance," the art of detecting who is collecting information on your efforts.

### Applying intelligence in correctional settings

In moving from theory to practice, it is useful to examine the role of applied intelligence in the correctional setting. On evaluating the specific security threat posed by an individual or group (threat analysis), an intelligence unit can issue a "threat assessment" indicating the perceived threat level as well as key information to be considered in continued strategic planning.

To illustrate, assume that strategic intelligence indicates that growing numbers of a specific motorcycle gang are entering the general population. While they are feuding with one other motorcycle gang, they tend to be compatible with most motorcycle gangs and with white supremacy groups. Operational intelligence indicates that specific members of the gang have been repeatedly approached by members of a white supremacy group requesting that they

carry out contracts, but thus far the gang has declined to do so.

A threat assessment is issued, indicating a "moderate threat" level, based on the fact that while violence does not appear imminent, the gang's strength, its propensity for violence, and its history of being approached to commit planned violence warrant further monitoring, an active collection plan, and general staff awareness.

While *threat* assessments tend to evaluate activities that occur on the initiative of inmates or their outside contacts, *risk* assessments evaluate specific institutional activities. For example, would it be risk-effective to escort a specific gang leader into a volatile area of the community for a funeral? A similar process might be used to evaluate which inmates are assigned to work late-night shifts in prison industries.

A vital application of the intelligence process is the continued production and review of strategic intelligence. The process allows prison officials to understand the scope of a particular security concern and how it may be only a facet of a larger pattern of activities by inmate groups. The ability to conceptualize security threats, to challenge previously held assumptions, to re-evaluate and reorder priorities, and to establish mission-oriented objectives directly supports institution security and the strategic planning process. The allocation of security resources, the deterrence of criminal activities, and the evaluation of security procedures can be managed through this process. A test of security-related strategic planning, and its effective use of intelligence, is its capacity to establish a pattern of response—a routine—for the most likely threats.



Above: A white supremacist publication of the Aryan Nations. The Aryan Brotherhood gang has been a major problem in prisons. Top left: Contraband weapons discovered at the U.S. Penitentiary, Marion, Illinois. Bottom left: Insignia of the Black Guerrilla Family gang.

### The role of staff and law enforcement

When analyzed in abstract terms, the intelligence process sounds vague, complicated, and difficult to execute. This need not be the case. The collection phase, for example, involves a coordinated and informed effort by intake screening staff, unit officers, work detail supervisors, teachers, correctional counselors, and other line staff to make and report observations regarding unusual inmate groupings, affiliations, tattoos, apparent alliances, and similar pieces of readily available information.

But staff at all levels must also be out in the institution, making observations and reporting them to the staff member identified as the collection point for this information—the Special Investigative Supervisor (SIS). These data, when

merged with similar intelligence from other agencies, will help us to better understand and meet the challenges of an increasingly sophisticated inmate population.

To the extent possible, the intelligence process must become a proactive tool for correctional management, as opposed to merely a reactive tool used in investigations. Every effort must be made to enlist the support of law enforcement officials at all levels to alert correctional staff regarding potential threat groups now being prosecuted—specifically, the identity of leaders or members of these groups who have skills or characteristics that pose a special threat. Law enforcement efforts are incomplete if we do not truly "incapacitate" convicted felons once in custody.

Every Bureau of Prisons staff member is a trained intelligence gatherer. Using your eyes and ears is the first principle of correctional work; learning to interpret what you see comes with experience. The entire concept of the "intelligence network" and strategic intelligence gathering grows from these seemingly simple principles of good correctional practice. It's staff members who have daily, face-to-face contacts with inmates; staff members who are trained to communicate on a personal level with often difficult people in less-than-ideal circumstances. This article has attempted to make the reader aware of the *formal* intelligence process; behind that is the *informal* process of what staff members do every day. ■

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