

MFR 04019815

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of Paul Akman

Type of Event: Interview

Date: December 23, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Michael Jacobson

Team number: 6

Location: FBI Headquarters/SIOC

Participants Non-Commission: FBI Assistant General Counsel Randy Blair

Participants - Commission: Caroline Barnes, Len Hawley, and Mike Jacobson

Background

Akman joined the FBI in 1988 after graduating from Villanova University. He first was a GS-5 file clerk in the CT Section. There were about 100 people in the section at the time. He was assigned to the unit responsible for State Sponsors, including the Palestinian IT matters. In 1993, he became an intelligence research specialist, in the organized crime/drugs intelligence unit of the Criminal Division. He worked Columbia drug trafficking matters until 9/11. He was working on a special project in Crystal City. On 9/11, he received a phone call from Steve McGraw. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He agreed to come back to HQ to work on this project. In January 2002, he was promoted to a supervisory analysts position, though he continued to work on this special project. In February 2002, he became a supervisory analyst in the CT analysis unit, and he was responsible for Sunni extremism matters. In March 2002, the unit chief transferred to the CI Division, and he became the acting unit chief.

[REDACTED]

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

Access to Intelligence Community Information

9/11 Classified Information

9/11 Classified Information

Relationship with NSA

9/11 Classified Information

Information sharing within the FBI

In terms of internal information sharing, one of the issues had been the information sharing between the operational and analytic units. To resolve this problem, the director decided to collocate the analysts and operational personnel. This occurred in October 2002. Akman thinks that this was a good move and that they need to be collocated. This would be true even if the FBI resolved its information technology issues.

ITOS has tasked the field to report on all of their cases on a number of occasions. After 9/11, they were flying in case agents on their investigations. The word is getting out that they better keep HQ apprised.

The operational units are getting information from everywhere but NY. He doesn't know what NY's problem is in this regard. They always send things in late. He understands that they are very busy. NY doesn't have enough analytic support and they are pretty much running 24 hours a day.

Analytic Units' Independence

The analytic unit can now send out products without operational approval. They do coordinate all of their products with the operational units though. Something which would have impact on an ongoing case or which is raised at the Director level, they would always make sure that the operational units are in the loop. For products going to the White House, he would always make sure that operational units see it.

FBI's Presidential Daily Report

The FBI does a daily Presidential report, which contains only FBI information. This includes not only CT information, but CI and criminal as well. The President Brief was supposed to go every day to the White House. He felt like this was getting in the way of real work.

Presidential Terrorist Threat Report

Threat related information is published by TTIC in the daily Presidential Terrorism Threat Report. Anything threat related, goes through TTIC. The PTTR only goes to a select few individuals. This product dictates the flow of his unit's day. He's the only one in his unit who is allowed to see the end product. The FBI Presidential report is also not widely available. Akman thinks that both products should be seen more widely. They are the unit with input into the products, and they don't even get to see them.

Every morning they have a production meeting. The EAD is there. The PTTR and the Director's Daily Report are discussed at this meeting. His unit has to write and coordinate their contributions to this report for the Director's 5 PM meeting. He and the analyst who drafted the piece would then go to the meeting.

They work with operations on the threat products. They would then reach out to TTIC and CTC for their input.

Threat Matrix

The Threat Matrix is the one document with everything. Everyone has access to this. Everyone else's daily reports focus on these threats as well. The threat matrix will be available on TTIC on line. The threat matrix dictates the flow of every CT unit's day.

Collocation

The collocation between CTD and CTC and TTIC is supposed to happen in September 2004.

HQ's focus on executive briefing, Capitol Hill response, etc.

Akman says that it's accurate to say that HQ's efforts are focused in large part on executive briefing. But, Akman notes, the alternative is to have poorly informed executives. They also spend a lot of time in his unit answering the same questions over and over from Congress and the various outside inquiries. At this point, everyone is trying to manage the FBI, and everyone is allowed to manage the FBI but the FBI.

TTIC

9/11 Classified Information

The FBI analysts at TTIC does have ACS access. There are between 8-16 FBI analysts at TTIC. The new FBI analysts assigned to TTIC don't know where to go to verify FBI information. There is a bad CIA culture over there.

9/11 Classified Information

When the President takes an interest in a threat, this gets a great deal of attention. This is particularly true in terms of threats to Texas.

9/11 Classified Information

Information Technology

The Director is surrounded by people who don't want to tell him bad news. This is a problem in terms of the information technology, and the progress they're making.

Akman has seen articles about revamping the technology and the new capabilities. He would like to see these things (implying that they don't really exist). It's almost amazing that the FBI is able to do what it can with what they have.

SCOPE is not a finished tool. Everyone does have it in his unit and they do use it. They weren't using it when Mark Miller left, but they are now. It's coming along. They now have 2 analysts who serve on the board as end users.

Akman is not sure whether all of the field offices have TS LANs.

Role of analysts

With regard to analysts, most of the problem was related to the lack of resources. Akman thinks that ideally: the IOS would attend to the needs of the case. The IRS would do that and would also "connect the dots." They would make sense of the dots, and would answer the "so what" question. For example, in the Lackawana 6 case, one might have thought that they were just hanging out at the mosque. With the intelligence from GTMO, etc. it brought this into clearer focus. They need IRSs to be all source analysts. This can't be done from the IOS position, with all of their day to day requirements. The reports officers should be getting threat information out there. He wouldn't describe this as an analytic position. It does take some analytic training, Akman conceded, to figure out when something is a threat. Baginski sees all three as interchangeable. He doesn't agree. If there would be a career path, it should be 1) be an IOS; 2) become a reports officer; 3) become an analyst. Akman noted that a number of his analysts now sit on the analyst advisory board reporting to Baginski.

Akman agrees that a year ago, the FBI analysts were doing primarily descriptive analysis. They are broadening it now. They had never had a strategic role before. The field IRSs are basically just glorified file clerks. This becomes abundantly clear when new SSAs come to HQ. They try to task IRSs with non-analytic task. Akman has a very qualified, bright IRS from his unit detailed to Indianapolis for two years. Her first few weeks they were throwing records at her and telling her to file them. That's the culture in the field. A lot of field analysts are just not analysts. Akman thinks that all 3 functions are needed in the field. The word is getting to the field offices that this needs to change.

Analytic Career development

They need to hire and train the analysts differently. The analysts should immediately go to Quantico for training, and then go to HQ for a year. They should then be sent to the field and they can then return to HQ. They don't have analyst training programs like this. They are starting to develop a career path for analysts. The analysts need to have a path more like agents.

Role of DHS

Akman is trying to figure out DHS's role. They do have a weekly meeting with DHS where they discuss the analytic perspective on different cases. They provide briefings and analytic exchanges weekly. They don't discuss operational matters at these meetings or actions to be taken. This exchange is doing nothing for the FBI. They don't get much of anything from DHS. Every morning he gets the DHS situation report. It's similar to the Director's daily report. The DHS report focuses on FBI cases. He is not sure how DHS is getting this information. The problem is that everyone seems to be reporting on the same thing. It all becomes a matter of whose daily report you read first. The Director's Daily report is just an internal FBI product.

He doesn't know what DHS's mission is. They don't have a strategic analytic capability. The thing that concerns him is that they are looking over the FBI's shoulder. There was an MOU signed between the FBI and DHS giving them access to all FBI information. The information sharing MOU is fine, but what is the FBI getting from DHS? They are just taking FBI information.

They've gotten a lot of requests for information from DHS.

Use of Strategic Analysis at the FBI

The case agents at the FBI are finding strategic analysis more valuable. His unit is getting a lot of positive feedback on their products. There is a thirst out there for this type of product.

Relations between the analytic and operational units

His unit is able to keep up on the field investigations. They have a daily meeting with the operational unit chiefs. They've had this every day since he's been there. They usually discuss 6-7 investigations at these meetings. Whatever happens overnight threat-wise becomes the case of the day, though all CT investigations are important. Akman's unit will do the pulls from the TS LAN to get relevant intelligence

The relations between the IOSs and the IRSs is much better. The collocation has really helped. People are getting away from the "this is my case" attitude that they used to suffer from. They are doing a better job delineating between the responsibilities of IRSs and IOSs, but it's still not entirely clear. Akman would be interested to hear Baginski's opinion on this subject.

Adaptability of al-Qa'ida

Al-Qa'ida adapts. Does the FBI have the capacity to deal with this? Akman thinks that al-Qa'ida will plan their next attack overseas and hopefully the members will come to the US and be in contact with a support structure that the FBI is already on top of.