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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of Margaret Gulotta, FBI Section Chief, Language Services Section, Office of International Operations, EAD for Law Enforcement Services

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Participants - Non-Commission: Assistant General Counsel Robert Sinton

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Background. Gulotta has been with the FBI for 34 years, most of them in Language Services (LS). She started in 1981 as a supervisor of translation staff at FBI Headquarters.

Language Services Structure. For years LS was in the Laboratory Division, then it was moved briefly to the Criminal Investigative Division (CID), then to the Investigative Services Division, and then to Law Enforcement Services. In practice, LS has always supported CID and the national security side of the house equally. Gulotta believes that the current set-up is the best to date. There has been some talk of moving LS into the Office of Intelligence. Gulotta believes that Maureen Baginski, the EAD for Intelligence, is attempting to do for intelligence what Gulotta has done for LS. Gulotta believes she has been effective because she owns the training, administration, etc. for all of the linguists. Gulotta believes a move to the Office of Intelligence would bring the analysts and linguists closer together. The higher grade linguists (GS-12 and GS-13) are really language analysts; they are more than just translators. Gulotta believes that the agents, analysts and linguists need to work as a team. Currently, the language analysts are necessarily located where the work is, which makes working as a team more complicated.

Data Management System. In the past, there were no Local Area Networks (LANs). Before 9/11 there was a plan to network nine offices using Spidernet. It was to be called Arachnet and was to be operational by 9/01. The network was funneled through the World Trade Center, so 9/11 caused the work to be stopped for a time. The system was replaced by Red Wolf, which manages just audio data (i.e., the majority of their work). Now, every field office is up on Arachnet, which is separate from FBINET and on an independent WAN. Because it's not on FBINET, Arachnet work has to be copied onto

FBINET. This is changing and needs to so that the information gets to the right people. A lot of the linguists don't necessarily know computers, so having several different systems makes their work even harder.

The "Casa de Web" idea became EDMS, the ELSUR Data Management System (this will be in use by the end of 2005). Users can view all collection for a case in chronological order, so a linguist can work on all aspects of a case. In the past, different linguists in different places would work on different aspects of a case. Analysts and agents can see all of this information as well. With this system the work can be assigned to linguists by subject rather than only by FISA. EDMS does not have a statistical reporting capability. They are putting money into the system to try to accelerate the creation of this capability. What is in EDMS can go easily into VCF (the Virtual Case File system currently under development) if need be – this is all part of FBINET. There is a big push right now for standardization to make this transfer of data easier; there is a new three day training and familiarization program.

Linguist Workforce. There are 1300 linguists in 50 field offices. The linguists aren't always where the work is and that will never change. The goal is 100 % coverage on all FISAs and they are at this point for some languages. The FBI is hiring more contractors than federal workers in part because Congress is providing more funding for the former. The FBI would rather have two feds for every contractor than the reverse. The only leverage the FBI has with contractors is to fire them, though they can use them when they need to "surge" on something and then can let them go when they don't need them. Since 9/11, the FBI has been offering its new fed slots to its contractors first.

On average, contractors work 29 hours/wk, so the work of two contractors is equivalent to the work of one fed.

The FBI has doubled the number of linguists without the commensurate space, supervisors or infrastructure. Congress has recognized this and recently approved 20 new infrastructure positions (note: I think these are the regional supervisory linguist positions discussed below). The FBI is asking for 45 of these positions for 2005.

Within two months of 9/11, the FBI had 20,000 applicants for linguist positions; now they have 50,000. 70 percent of new hires cannot pass the language test (listening, translating, English). Ten applicants yield only one hire. The main obstacle is often the English test. The FBI loses 40 percent from the polygraph test, then loses additional applicants based on the background investigation.

Gulotta does not believe that the FBI has hired people "too fast." She said that the FBI has not "ever" sacrificed the process to get people on board. After 9/11, the FBI was in a hiring freeze. The Administrative Services Division put together a tiger team to focus on hiring linguists, and this is how the FBI was able to bring so many linguists on board so quickly. It is the case that new hires didn't get great security training right away, so they may not have known all of the rules, etc.

For the CT and CI linguist contractors the FBI has instituted a "Post Adjudicative Risk Management Program" in 2002, which involves taking a polygraph in the first year. There have been some linguists who have come out deceptive or inconclusive, but no more than in the typical population (11 of 3-400 washed out). This program was implemented because hiring contractors involves greater risk than hiring feds, not because there have been significant problems. Most linguist applicants have significant foreign travel and connections. Every linguist in the federal hiring process right now is an existing contractor.

Relationship Between Linguists and Agents/Analysts. The agents have always been viewed as the "owners" of the case information so they do the final minimization review of the linguists' translations. The FBI's Office of General Counsel is looking at this situation now because it would be easier for the linguists to conduct this final minimization review. They usually do it anyway.

To some extent the linguists who are in remote locations talk more frequently (by phone) with the agents they support than those who are located in the field offices with the agents. Things are changing, but it takes agents a while to understand the linguists' need for context and an understanding of the case, and to understand that linguists can provide cultural insights, etc.

Gulotta thinks that FBI personnel are working more as a team now; it's a training issue. They need to be sure that all parts of the team are forced to work together. She thinks as soon as they do they'll see the benefit, so a new Division is not necessary. This is just part of changing the way they do business.

It's hard to get analysts to see the value of the linguists. Analysts want linguists to translate everything b/c they don't always trust their triaging. Any tension comes from this and from the different ages of the two groups (linguists typically are older), and from getting used to working together. Linguists need to tell the analysts and agents that they cannot do the work without more information (i.e., context).

ACS. Every linguist should have FBINET (ACS, E-mail) and Redwolf on his/her desktop today. In the past, linguists didn't have FBINET on their desktops and had to go elsewhere to use it.

Management of Linguists. Linguists have always reported to their field office management, but Gulotta is changing this. There aren't linguist supervisors in each field office, so she is going to place regional supervisory language specialists at HQs who will serve as reviewing officials for the field supervisors. She is now not requiring supervisors to have foreign language skills; she just wants them to be good managers.

There is also a regional language services center that links several field offices that had been doing their own thing. Now, the work is sent to the linguist rather than sending the linguist to the work. Gulotta has had to talk directly to the SACs to convince them to send the work to the linguists. This is more efficient.

Linguists still must travel occasionally. When a linguist is needed to translate Title III ELSUR he/she has to travel to the field office in question because Title III requires that the linguist listen to the take live. Linguists must also travel overseas on occasion, or to assist during a trial.

The biggest challenge is managing 1300 linguists in 50 field offices. The 20 positions (infrastructure, above) will help.

English Monitoring Center. The FBI has set up this center after 9/11 to handle the FISA take that is in English. It initially was a temporary center at the CJIS facility (West VA) and the FBI temporarily assigned 15 support employees to work there. Now this center is on the network.

Linguists as Analysts. NSA linguists are native English speakers, so possess a different skill set. They are called Language Analysts and are a hybrid of the Bureau's analyst and linguist positions. Not all FBI linguists have the skill set to do what the NSA Language Analysts do. Many FBI linguists are attending the College of Analytical Studies because it is important for them to be trained in analysis. It's hard to spare them for six weeks as it adds to the unaddressed workload. Some linguists do become analysts (maybe 20 percent).

Quality Control. The FBI has always had this but not nationwide. In January 2003, they implemented the Program nationwide. At a minimum, all of a new linguists work is reviewed for the first three months. This is excessive, because one knows the problem linguists up front. Thereafter, one sample work product per quarter is reviewed. This process hasn't surfaced any spies. Gulotta would like to have a separate staff at HQ to do this QC.

Grade levels. Supervisory linguists are GS-13s, so there is no incentive to do all of the extra work required. They might as well be GS-13 linguists. Very few linguists get past the GS-13 level at NSA, although some go up to the SES level.

NSA v. FBI Volume of Work. The volume of NSA take is phenomenal so they must use technology to triage it. The FBI, in contrast, always knows who it is listening to. GAO reviewed the FBI's workload planning process after 9/11 and "loved it."

FISA Translation Backlog. Machines are not good at reporting statistics, but enable comparison over time. On average their CT coverage is at 92 percent. It's 89 percent with audio and odd languages. Gulotta has nothing to do with the FISA process. The current requirement with CT FISAs is that they must be translated "near live" (i.e., within 12 hours). With CI FISAs they can listen more selectively in accordance with current events, etc. Gulotta expects problems as they speed up the legal review process for FISAs as this will cause Language Services to become backed up as well. Field offices do their own prioritization, but HQ steps in when an office has an important case and no translators. Similarly, the CT Division sets its own priorities and Language Services

responds accordingly. Language Services does not prioritize any of the work itself. If the Criminal Division comes to Gulotta and says it has translation work associated with a drug case with a CT nexus, Gulotta tells them to go through the CT Division to get the assignment to her. Raytheon currently is designing a system to tell you how many translations have been done, how long it took to finish each one, etc.

After 9/11, she told the linguists to go back 30 to 60 days and listen to the take again. However, because of the way the system was set up, it was impossible to tell what of the archived work had actually been reviewed and completed, and what was unaddressed work. So they decided that dealing with the current take was more important than dealing with the backlog.

National Virtual Translation Center. The FBI is its biggest customer, especially in languages where they don't have translators. There is no downside. The FBI is doing all of the NVTC's background investigations. She doesn't see the NVTC as competition (i.e., for new translators); it is only there to augment. She thinks the rest of the US Government needs the NVTC more than the FBI does. The FBI is used to asking for help. One of the NVTC deputies is an FBI employee. The FBI asked its contractors if they wanted to do NVTC work on their off hours and they did. It's unclassified work, off the Internet and done at home. The FBI is giving the NVTC one out of every three linguists it hires.

DC Translation Center. She is trying to get Congressional approval to build a 250 person translation center in DC at the Washington Field Office. They also are building out at San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami, San Diego and Honolulu.

Statistics. Since 9/11, they have hired 136 Arabic linguists (now have 206 vs. 70 prior to 9/11), 31 Farsi linguists (they are now at 100 % for Farsi), 9 Pashtu (had 1 pre-9/11), 15 Urdu (6 pre 9/11), 6 Kurdish (0 before 9/11), and a few who speak Dari (now at 100 % for this language as well).