A CALL FOR THE INTEGRATION OF 'BIOGRAPHICAL INTELLIGENCE' INTO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL

ABSTRACT

Biographical Intelligence is an established concept within Intelligence circles and is used to develop a wider picture of activities of heads of state and politicians likely to be harmful to the interests of the sovereign state collecting such data. However, to date, despite the adoption of the National Intelligence Model in Britain and its role in changing the face of policing - the concept of biographical intelligence has yet to mature within policing circles. This briefing paper examines this overlooked issue and using a case study illustrates why Biographical Intelligence could prove to be a useful addition to the Intelligence armoury of policing. The paper demonstrates how a crime-entrepreneur can gain competitive advantage across a life time by exploiting existing gaps in the intelligence system and how as a result they can stay 'one step' ahead of the police intelligence apparatus. The constructed narrative shows up systemic flaws that are still relevant and open to exploitation by resourceful and intelligent criminals.

**A CALL FOR THE INTEGRATION OF 'BIOGRAPHICAL INTELLIGENCE'
INTO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL**

INTRODUCTION – THE NATURE OF BIOGRAPHICAL INTELLIGENCE

At an ontological and epistemological level, policing is very much a narrative based process. Indeed, Police Officers are socialised into listening out for and actively seeking information and intelligence on crimes and criminals. Police officers spend countless hours whilst on patrol talking to criminals, the public and each other. In the vernacular of policing this was known as gathering stories and whispers. Police Officers wile away the hours of boredom repeating these stories to each other. Over time some officers develop an ability to link such stories and knowledge into cohesive narratives or biographies of active criminals and criminal gangs. It could be argued that such knowledge was in fact an oral form of 'Biographical Intelligence'.

Biographical Intelligence is defined in 'The Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms' (US Department of Defence, 2005) as 'That component of intelligence that deals with individual foreign personalities of actual or potential importance'. It is collected intelligence data that includes information on the views, traits, habits, skills and relationships (in police terms - associates) of a subject. It can be gleaned from newspaper articles, magazines, biographies, internet web sites and from data held in any official file. At present, although it is a widely used intelligence gathering methodology in Military and State intelligence circles it is not at present part of the lexicon of intelligence as proscribed in the UK's National Intelligence Model. This conceptual paper examines why this is so and proposes the adoption and utilisation of biographical data as an intelligence source for the investigation of criminals. Although this type of data is already regularly utilised, particularly by

those investigating serious and organized crime this call differs in that it is a cumulative living biography as opposed to a one off product authored by asset recovery officers, researchers and analysts for a specific operation. It differs from existing NIM products such as 'subject profiles' and 'lifestyle intelligence' which plays a vital role in the seizure of criminal profits.

The respected criminologist Henner Hess (Hess, 1988: 48) in his study of Mafioso incisively argued that the police pay scant attention to the life stories of individual criminals. His important insight into the mindset of policing has yet to be exploited in full by the police service. As a result of reading of the works of Hess (Hess, 1988) and Pinno Arlacchi (Arlacchi, 1986) into the Mafia Mindset, it becomes apparent that the development of a full blown Mafioso takes a life time and is an ontological development best accommodated in narrative form as a life story or biography. This is so because the fledgling Mafioso has to pass through different developmental stages associated with the different stages of his life. To paraphrase the writings of both Hess and Arlacchi a fledgling Mafia Don in his youth must pass through an anomic stage in which he commits crime prolifically whilst developing a twin reputation for violence and making money. In this phase a term in jail is inevitable and is an important part of his criminal education. As the fledgling Don passes `though his twenties he is expected to become a proficient professional criminal and by his thirties have developed a reputation as a serious businessman. By his mid forties he is expected to be in the position whereby he is able to distance himself from everyday crime and don the appearance of a respectable entrepreneur and family man. Thus it is apparent that over the life span of an individual criminal career different policing strategies and methods of collecting intelligence will be necessary to interdict such criminal entrepreneurs. Via this process the criminal

generates a stock of stories and legend which he can use as a social currency upon which to trade. This ontological process of development is applicable to the criminal careers of many ordinary yet organised British criminals. In fact what Hess and Arlacchi were describing is a life-story or biographical approach to gathering intelligence on career criminals.

Also of interest in this respect is the work of Professor Petrus Van Duyne (Van Dune, 1999) who was surprised by the encyclopaedic knowledge held in the minds of officers in a Serious Crime Squad about individual criminals. However, he was dismayed by the lack of systematic written integration of this knowledge into the intelligence system. Thus it could be said that the members of the Crime Squad operated instinctively at a cognitive level and when called upon to do so could narrate convincing biographies of the criminals they targeted. Also of interest in this respect is the work of Braga, Piehl and Kennedy (1999: 282) who narrate that street based officers in Chicago as practitioners had a strong and shared collective sense of the lives of street gang members and their families. They (Braga, Piehl and Kennedy, 1999: 290) describe this internalised knowledge as an evolving narrative that changes from day to day but elements of which remain constant. Moreover, (Braga, Piehl and Kennedy, 1999: 294) bemoan the lack of formal effort to capture these living (biographical?) and insightful narratives which remain trapped within the minds of certain police officers containing sophisticated intelligence on gang members. Indeed, Braga, Piehl and Kennedy regard such stories as being a rich untapped resource for diagnosing crime problems. Likewise, Engel et al (2008) advocate the mapping of such collective knowledge into cohesive and coherent intelligence narratives. These examples are consistent with the views of Higgins (2004: 80) that large amounts of intelligence remain tacit inside the head of an officer. The problem

for the police intelligence community is how to tap into this rich source of raw intelligence data. The use of biographical intelligence offers one such solution.

BUILDING ON THE COGNATIVE NATURE OF THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS

Criminal Intelligence is said to be the 'life blood of policing'. Few would disagree with this statement particularly in the last decade, which has seen considerable strides in the way 'we' in the British Police deal with the gathering and dissemination of criminal intelligence (see Ratcliffe, 2008). In a period of less than twenty years the Police Service has moved away from a card based 4 x 4 system operated by a localised 'Collator' to new 5 x 5 computerised intelligence data bases and the setting up of local intelligence cells. However, the 'forward looking ethos' of intelligence gathering has not changed. The purpose of intelligence is to predict future patterns of behaviour. A less realised aim is for intelligence to have the ability to 'look backwards' into the past where as David Canter (Canter 1995) has stressed the criminal is more vulnerable in his history.

In former times the 'Collator' was an indispensable part of the fight against crime. The archetypal Collator is PC Ventris from the British Television Comedy – 'Heartbeat'. Although Ventris is portrayed as a lazy officer who tries to get away with doing little, his brain is always active and he can be counted upon to remember forgotten items of intelligence which have a tendency to 'crack' the case wide open. Ventris as Collator was thus a guardian and protector of institutional knowledge.

Hughes & Jackson (2004: 66) acknowledge the 'protective role' of the collator whose task was to ensure that police officers recorded the important information they received in the course of their duty. Hughes & Jackson stress that 'a criterion for the position of collator was an ability to intuitively and serendipitously link seemingly unrelated pieces of data to produce intelligence (knowledge) that could be used by other officers in the investigation of crime'. Hughes & Jackson (2004: 66) incisively note that nowadays in the computer age all officers must 'fulfill the role of 'collator' themselves'. Collators usually had considerable service in that area and as a consequence had developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of crime and criminals in their patch. They knew who was related to whom and because they had absorbed every item of intelligence and had listened to the stories told by detectives, street based officers and thief takers they pretty well knew everything about crime at a local level that was worth knowing. Although this is obviously an idealised generalisation it was dependent upon the dedication of individual 'Collators' it nevertheless has veracity (Ratcliffe, 2002). Maguire & John (1995 (1995: 19) talk of the virtues of the traditional collator's role but stress that there is a perception that many a collators job was the province of the 'lame and the walking dead'. Like all manual information handling systems the system was dependent upon the quality of the person operating the system.

The main point to take from this is that the business of intelligence was still very much a cognitive mental process. The 'Collator' acted in an entrepreneurial manner (Fletcher, 2006) and his stock in trade was to act as an organisational storyteller. Indeed, the mental map of many street based officers is narrative based and is developed through listening to 'cops and robbers stories' from their more experienced colleagues. Street based officers pass the time of day in squad cars, in

the witness rooms at Court and in the Pub after work. Being able to tell a good story is part and parcel of the organisational education of the ordinary police officer. As a consequence old fashioned Collators, Street Coppers, Thief takers and Detectives had an ability to narrate stories of individual criminals that quite frankly could be described as biographical in that in breadth and depth it far exceeded the written intelligence records. When such individuals retire their biographic intelligence retires with them. However, critics of this period such as Cope (2004) have argued convincingly that this process was 'Investigation Led' rather than 'Intelligence Led'.

Fast forward twenty years and we now have a situation where Criminal Intelligence Departments have proliferated drawing staff away from the streets. We have entered the age of 'Intelligence Led Policing'. For Ratcliffe (2008) intelligence led policing is a business model and a managerial philosophy. Instead of a lone heroic 'Collator' operating as an information entrepreneur we know have an intelligence apparatus which consists of researchers, analysts, local intelligence officers, field intelligence officers and an array of other specialist posts such as CHIS handlers and Asset Confiscation Officers. Intelligence is now firmly in the domain of the Criminal Investigation Department and has developed into a bureaucratic model governed by the National Intelligence Model (NIM) and the RIPA/RIPSA legislation. For example, individual police officers are now forbidden to run informants and must pass these on to handlers. This removes the entrepreneurial element from the equation and as a consequence many street based officers have lost the ability to develop low level informants. Thus what we can and cannot do with the stories we collect is prescribed by the codex that is NIM. Broadly speaking the National Intelligence Model has professionalized intelligence gathering and dissemination within the British Police Service. Granted it is a business process and model for

intelligence management which presupposes there is professional gathering of intelligence and although neither the NIM process or its utilisation at BCU level actually do anything to enable or achieve the increased professionalization of intelligence gathering – the very fact that it does prescribe what can and cannot be done therefore has an unintentional 'knock on effect'. However, it produces intelligence products such as the strategic assessment; the tactical assessment; the problem profile; and the target profile in a mechanistic manner. Quite often those who prepare the products are civilian members of staff who have never met the criminals they are writing about. The ensuing product can often be sterile and based solely on what is held within the computer system. Also much of the time of intelligence analysts and researchers is spent on serving the requirements of the NIM process and providing statistics for the Tasking and Coordinating process, leaving little time for authoring biographies. Notwithstanding this, theoretically, it may thus be possible to build upon the National Intelligence Model.

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL

According to Grieve (2004) traditionally, intelligence has been used in a haphazard way and likewise Flood (2004: 40) argues that much intelligence activity was based upon short term operational objectives. Intelligence systems and models by their very nature collect vast amounts of information and to manage this intelligence gathering has to adopt a forward looking ethos. This entails regularly deleting intelligence from the system (often automatically). The pace of technological change also leads to the mothballing of old information intelligence systems. This can lead to a fragmentation

of the 'organizational memory' and to the process of institutional forgetting. Thus what once was has ceased to be. Nevertheless, the intelligence of past times and events may continue to live on in the minds of officers involved. This intelligence is still capable of being narrated as a 'stream of consciousness' by the individual officers. Such officers may possess an encyclopaedic knowledge of a criminal business community, or of criminals from the travelling community. Nevertheless, Kleiven (2005) a critic of the NIM process has asked where the intelligence is in the national intelligence model. Although Kleiven points out some flaws in the NIM process it has by and large proved to be both successful and measurable in terms of what it delivers. Indeed, Sheptycki (2004) argues that the introduction of the NIM and Intelligence-Led Policing methodologies coincided with the rise in international interest in serious and organised crime, albeit Sheptycki notes that organisational problems bedevil police information systems (such as NIM).

The above discussion is not intended as a criticism of the NIM process or its conceptualisation, design, or implementation per se. The intention is to invoke a critical examination of the realities faced by the police intelligence community in the utilisation of the tenets of the process which can be used as a base upon which to build upon existing good practice. Indeed, there is a growing literature on the NIM model – particularly evaluation studies. For example see - ACPO reports (2004) (2005) (2005a); Flood (2004); John & Maguire (2004a); Kleiven (2005); and Maguire & John (2006). Hopefully, this study will build upon this body of work.

To return to the days of the mythical, 'all knowing' Collator there was often a stability and cohesiveness to policing which is now not always present. Individual officers often spent their entire careers in a town or area and grew up (professionally speaking) with local villains. Consequentially, they became aware of the ontological

development of criminal fraternities. This intelligence was an internalised product narrated as stories and passed down as criminal folklore in a stream of consciousness. It was quite a sophisticated level of intelligence despite being of the oral tradition. Being narrative based it could span a twenty year period and encompass many individuals. As an oral intelligence product it could be formalised as biography by having officers dictate it straight onto a Dictaphone type machine[1]. Such intelligence used to be passed on to other officers in conversation but now it is not uncommon for almost an entire staff of a police station to change over a five year period leading to a break down in the oral intelligence cycle. Thus there is no longer longevity to living police memory. Granted, intelligence profiles can encompass some of the material but such NIM products are compiled from current police intelligence files. The resultant target profile may lack a historical element. Moreover, Phillips, Caless & Bryant (2007) argue that intelligence is frequently blamed when operations against criminals go wrong; and that criminal intelligence is a commodity, which requires dispassionate analysis. They call for an intelligent use intelligence to tackle serious organised crime. The use of Biographical Intelligence has potential to be such an intelligent use of intelligence.

Clearly, more intelligence-gathering resources would help along with more intelligence management resources. The adoption of this methodology may require the implementation of new statutory powers to assist in the gathering and prolonged holding of such data. Much of the desirable data may only be accessed following the deployment of coercive statutory powers for other forms of investigation. This also raises human rights issue because such biographical data would undoubtedly not only

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[1] If narrated to a researcher in this manner it would become an ethnographic interview and reconstructed as written biography.

engage the Article 8 rights of the subject but also the article 8 rights of the subject's family, friends and associates. One way to circumvent this may be too retain biographical intelligence as an oral intelligence product narrated by a designated Intelligence Officer. There is a clear potential for 'Biographical Intelligence to become a valuable new investigative tool.

INTRODUCING BIOGRAPHICAL INTELLIGENCE AS A NEW INVESTIGATIVE TOOL

In this respect it is therefore significant that Professor Petrus Van Duyne (Van Duyne, 1999) advocated the use of organograms, socio-grams and bubble grams which allow the inclusion of oral and anecdotal evidence in identity building because these are also useful mechanisms in the construction of biographies. An organogram is an organization chart with names instead of the designations; a sociogram is a graphic representation of social links that a person has – a sociometric chart that plots the structure of interpersonal relations in a group situation; whereas a bubble gram is a 3D representation of a sociogram. Indeed, the universally accepted intelligence tools marketed by '**i2**' work on similar principles. Van Duyne also urged police to build personality profiles of target criminals. According to Professor David Canter (Canter, 1995) crime entrepreneurs such as those discussed in this paper are vulnerable in their history because they repeat successful behaviours and actions and become trapped in cognitive tunnels leading to the repetition of predictable behaviours from which future criminal actions can be predicted. Written biographies of such ordinary, but organised, criminals are a proficient method of capturing such elusive data, patterns, stories and shadow narratives. This is particularly relevant because traditionally the

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police view the ordinary British Criminal with contempt as a 'semi-professional bungler' (Webster & McGuire, 1973). Although this view was written thirty years ago it is still perhaps relevant to a limited extent albeit there is a growing appreciation of the links between organised crime, businesses and local criminal facilitators[2]. In towns and cities across Britain there are career criminals and criminal businessmen who mastermind and influence local crime. Frustratingly many fall short of being the stereotypical 'Mr Big' figure which should trigger intensive police activity and lead to proactive policing operations against them. Moreover, many such active criminals remain just below the notional triggering threshold as police play a waiting game for them to make a mistake upon which the police can capitalise. There clearly must be a better way – namely the adoption of 'Biographical Intelligence' as a pragmatic intelligence tool. This biographical process is proactive because it entails the active collection of data as well as interviewing key witnesses and police officers. It is a consolidation of existing knowledge into an easy to read narrative format.

Biographical intelligence is a form of narrative intelligence as envisaged by Randall (1999). Biography is a highly stylised form of writing and biographies are organised on a highly structured basis (Denzin, 1999). Writing biographies is a skill - in which one can be trained and one can self teach via books such as that of Roberts (2002). Consequentially, the author envisages the introduction of trained biographers to work alongside intelligence researchers and analysts to produce a different intelligence product – biographies of active criminals who appear to have the uncanny ability to operate with impunity over a long period of time. There are a number of ways in which this could be done.

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[2] For example – the 'Risky Business' Seminars supported by ACPOS, SCDEA, the Scottish Business Crime Centre and the Scottish Government highlight this threat.

- ➢ By recruiting and training individuals with the organisational ability to write / author biographies – perhaps from a literary or librarian back ground. Such individuals could either be based in Local Intelligence Cells or in Force Research Departments.

- ➢ By training existing researchers with the inclination and capacity to undertake such a task.

- ➢ By employing ex-officers with a knowledge of an area and its criminals on a part-time basis or on a short term contract to author such biographies.

A wide variety of intelligence data can be used in the construction of biographical intelligence namely:-

- ➢ Personal documents such as diaries and prison letters;

- ➢ Auto-biographies (perhaps relevant if the subject has written one);

- ➢ Family and oral histories in circulation;

- ➢ Photographs;

- ➢ Personal and family artefacts; and

- ➢ Research interviews.

Having said this, it is necessary to consider the practicalities and realities of acquiring such data much of which will not generally be available to the authorities. In particular there may well be implications in terms of Data Protection and Human Right Legislation particularly in respect of diaries and prison letters. To be made available to investigators such data would require to 'be' subject to additional corroboration by other verifiable information. In many cases statutory powers would be required to access such documents and artefacts. Nevertheless, this is worthy of careful consideration.

It is obvious that there will be pitfalls to collecting reliable data upon which to author a biography. Once the basic biography was written one would assume that it would be an easy matter to keep it updated until one considers that intelligence departments are generally understaffed and struggle to input basic data such as recent stop / checks. The author accepts that under current staffing levels it may be unrealistic to expect intelligence officers to author such biographies. In an unsolicited academic study such as this, this author stops short of recommending that further intelligence resourcing is granted. However commissioning a trial of 'Biographical Intelligence' as a product, conducted in real time would clearly be a step forward. By doing so it would be possible to assess how such biographies benefit the investigation of serious and organised criminals. The author suggests that officers on light duties be utilised or retired officers could given short term contracts to author and maintain such data bases[3]. Thereafter, on an annual basis the plethora of intelligence gathered about a target could be abbreviated into several paragraphs describing the activities of an individual criminal or gang and incorporated into the text of the biography. A resume of the number of intelligence logs received along with an overview of the type of intelligence received can be an important starting point for officers in the future because it provides evidence of the enterprising nature of the criminal over time. In this manner an overview of the intelligence received could be produced which may prove helpful to officers in the future. If such biographic documents were available as 'a living document' new officers posted into an area could read them and self-brief themselves on the criminal history of their area. It is necessary at this point to again consider the realities and practicalities of such an undertaking. Although there is a high turnover of staff in many BCU's and that many areas have high crime rates the

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[3] The author is indebted to the reviewers for pointing out the practicalities of such work.

author still considers it to be feasible to expect busy officers to self-brief from such biographies because front line officers still have times where they have to conduct guard and security duties within police stations. It need not be a case of losing officers for days on end whilst they self brief or read themselves in. Also consider the down time on night shifts and patrolling. Once one officer had read the biography they could pass on such valuable intelligence to other colleagues as they would undoubtedly be telling stories to each other anyway. In former times such intelligence was often disseminated at an oral level anyway. There is no reason why this could not be the case now.

This would be a proficient method of retaining valuable criminal intelligence because any one who reads the narrative can narrate it to others because it remains valuable even when fragmented. Any discrepancies can be challenged and information which may have been lost or was once common knowledge can be rewritten into the biography. In the event of a target criminal becoming a priority investigation the police would have a comprehensive document which would be of considerable value to both Senior Investigating Officers and Profilers. Actively authoring such documents is essential because from an ontological basis serious and organised criminals operate from a geographical comfort base and tend to stay in the same area for a prolonged period of time during which police officers regularly move on for a variety of reasons. Thus the organised criminal benefits from organisational regeneration and institutional forgetting. This provides the criminals with a competitive advantage which they can and do exploit over a life time of crime. Although associates and contacts may drop off the intelligence map after a few years the obligations and favours they generate often do not. Furthermore, this paper makes

a contribution by considering some of the practical implications of applying this intelligence methodology and to acquiring some of the data proposed.

Innes, Fielding & Cope (2005) argue that the products of crime analysis are better understood as an artefact of the data and methods used in their construction, rather than providing an accurate representation of any crime problems. Biographical Intelligence as an oral intelligence methodology is not an abstract intelligence artefact but a living evolving criminal (hi)story. Professor Steven Savage (2007) in his article in this journal entitled 'Neighbourhood Policing and the Reinvention of the Constable' introduces a recurring concept namely that of a return to traditional ways of policing. In his case Savage argued that a process of reinvention of officer capabilities is taking place as the community constable is reinvented as a specialist. It could equally be argued that the inclusion of a new role of 'Biographer' into the expanding arena of local intelligence cells could reintroduce some of the lost institutional memory and oral intelligence that was swept away with the demise of the 'All remembering Collator'. In any case, for Ratcliffe (2003) concentrating upon criminals is more effective than concentrating upon individual crimes. Introducing 'Biographical Intelligence' as a new product in the NIM Model would empower 'Intelligence Operatives' to concentrate upon the criminal hi(stories) of ordinary organised criminals. Although current intelligence structures do not recreate the (admittedly highly idealised) vision presented of the traditional collator in the opening section the integration of 'Biographical Intelligence' into the NIM model would be a viable form of restoration (or re-storying?). Nevertheless, it could even be argued that the historical circumstances portrayed above in relation to the mythical 'Collator' were never true. Indeed, the MacPherson Report was highly critical of how Collators failed to disseminate their wealth of knowledge. Flood (2004: 45) argues that we

have difficulty in trying to visualise the criminal environment. Biographical Intelligence enables us to gain a valuable insight into how a criminal has conducted his business over a prolonged period of time – painting a sophisticated word picture of crime and criminal endeavour. Furthermore it permits us to 'look back' whilst looking ahead (Flood, 2004: 52). There is no logical reason why 'Biographical Intelligence' cannot become a valuable asset in the NIM armoury because it is a 'bottom up' intelligence product, an artefact of policing activity per se.

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