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“Should the United States Collect Intelligence on its Close Allies?”

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“Should the United States Collect Intelligence on its Close Allies?”

Abstract

The United States does not collect intelligence against all countries with the same intensity. Members of the so-called Five Eyes alliance—the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand— are believed to be excluded, and allegedly so is the United Arab Emirates. Should this policy continue in today’s unpredictable and fast-changing geopolitical environment?

The Five Eyes alliance has given the United States an unmatched level of integration with its allies by increasing intelligence sharing between its members—but does this mean the United States should still not collect intelligence on them? Especially now that the UAE has allegedly been added to this short list, there are critics who claim that not collecting intelligence on these countries is creating a dangerous and possibly expanding knowledge gap—that America is missing out on critical pieces of intelligence.

The United States does, however, collect on other “allies.” It has been caught spying on Germany’s Chancellor, Angela Merkel, on French companies who were allegedly supplying nuclear hardware to Iran, on the pro-Russian government Austria (NATO member), on Turkey, and on Israel. There are arguably instances where intelligence collection on these allies has been critical—for example, intelligence on the 9/11 hijackers who planned their attacks while they were in Germany, or allegations that Turkey may be backing elements within the Islamic State.

Is the United States subverting its national security interests by not collecting on its close allies overseas, and now, allegedly, the UAE?

Introduction

Concordant definitions of the key terms in this paper is vital for understanding its overall argument. For the purposes of this paper, “Intelligence collection” is referring to the process of gathering information within or outside of the United States that involves threats to the US’ national security, homeland security, its people, its property, and/or its interests.¹ This paper will be focusing primarily on one of the six major types of intelligence collection—human intelligence, or “HUMINT,” which is any intelligence gathered from a human source. HUMINT collection obtains a type of intelligence which other collection techniques cannot— intentions.

An “ally” is widely known as a person, group, or nation that is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose². Pulling from this definition, a “close ally” of the US can be outlined as a country that has similar interests to and is in close cooperation with the US. These countries’ economic and political systems tend to mirror that of the US’ and share a common historical history.

There is no known existing definition for a “close intelligence ally.” However, for the purposes of this paper, a close intelligence ally of the US will be defined as a country that falls into a classification of either the Five Eyes Alliance, the 9 Eyes Alliance, or the 14 Eyes Alliance. The different levels of alliances designate the amount of intelligence shared between those countries.

¹ “What Is Intelligence?” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, ODNI, www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/what-is-intelligence.

² “Allies.” Dictionary.com, Dictionary.com, www.dictionary.com/browse/allies.

Intelligence Alliances

The Five Eyes Alliance

The Five Eyes Alliance was forged immediately following World War II in 1946, originally just between the United States and the United Kingdom. Its purpose was to continue intelligence-sharing efforts between the two countries, which had intensified in the context of their alliance in World War II.³ The agreement eventually expanded to include three other countries: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. All five members of the alliance are English-speaking and have similar political systems. The term “Five Eyes” stems from the “US/AUS/CAN/NZ/UK Eyes Only” classification level that was traditionally used to specify which countries had access to their information.⁴

The Five Eyes alliance was put in place to facilitate sharing of signals intelligence (SIGINT) among its members. Through the alliance, the member countries are allegedly expected to exchange critical SIGINT as well as the methods and techniques related to the SIGINT operations.⁵

Even though the existence of this alliance is widely known, most of its details and inner workings remain highly classified. An illustrative example of the secrecy surrounding the Five Eyes Alliance is that the Office of the Prime Minister in Australia was not aware of it until 1973, nearly 30 years after the original deal was struck. The alliance itself did not become public knowledge until 2005, and was only officially acknowledged in 2010, when the text of the original UKUSA Agreement

³ National Archives. “Homepage.” The National Archives. The National Archives, June 13, 2008.

⁴ ODNI Home. Accessed October 10, 2019.

⁵Cox, James. “Canada And the Five Eyes Intelligence Community” Internet Archive, December 1, 2012.

was released by the British and American governments.⁶

Under the agreement, each country conducts collection operations and analyses in their respective parts of the world. The countries' specified areas are not publicly known, but there is speculation that: the UK is mainly responsible for Europe, Western Russia, and the Middle East; the United States oversees the Middle East, China, Russia, and Africa; Canada focuses on Russia, China, and Latin America; and Australia and New Zealand mainly monitor Asia. However, intelligence sharing is not limited to their specified areas.⁷

This level of information-sharing is based on an unparalleled degree of trust and confidence. On a daily basis, a significant volume of finished SIGINT products is shared among the members of the Five Eyes alliance. Therefore, counterintelligence threats affecting individual members of the alliance can be extremely damaging to the alliance as a whole. Recently, for example, the director general of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's intelligence unit, Cameron Ortis, was charged with espionage—he had access to classified Five Eyes information.⁸ This caused major implications for US national security since Ortis had access to the alliance's information. The leak poses a severe threat to US national security since the US routinely shares highly classified information with Canada.

There are rumors of a “no-spy pact” between the Five Eyes members, though, none of which have been officially verified. However, there is a general understanding that there is no need to collect

⁶ Tossini, J. Vitor. “The Five Eyes - The Intelligence Alliance of the Anglosphere.” UK Defence Journal, 2017.

⁷ Cox, James. “Canada and the Five Eyes Intelligence Community.” OpenCanada, December 18, 2012.

⁸ Doherty, Ben. “Spy Scandal: Canada Reassures Allies over Leak That May Be Linked to Australian Drug Syndicate.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, 2019.

on each other because of the extent of the intelligence sharing between them.⁹

9 Eyes, 14 Eyes

In addition to the Five Eyes, there are other known intelligence sharing alliances such as the Nine Eyes and the 14 Eyes. The Nine Eyes consists of the Five Eyes countries as well as Denmark, France, Holland, and Norway. The 14 Eyes consists of the Nine Eyes members, as well as Germany, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, and Spain. Each level of the alliances has different characteristics. Such as—the Five Eyes alliance has very extensive intelligence sharing and an alleged “no spy” contract between them. The Nine Eyes is not rumored to have the “no spy” pact, but does involve intelligence sharing, though, less than with the Five Eyes. The 14 Eyes involves a more limited amount of intelligence sharing than with the Nine Eyes or the Five Eyes members.

Case Study: The United Arab Emirates

US-UAE Relations

The UAE is not officially a part of the Five Eyes, Nine Eyes, or 14 Eyes alliances, but according to CIA sources, the US and the UAE now allegedly hold a “no spy” agreement. The US and the UAE have had, what the US Department of State describes as, a “strong and friendly” relationship since the UAE’s independence from the United Kingdom in 1971.¹⁰ At that time, the US was only the third country to establish relations with the UAE. In 1972, the US Embassy was established in Abu Dhabi, while the UAE Embassy was established in Washington, DC in 1974.¹¹ Since official

⁹ Cox, James. “Canada And the Five Eyes Intelligence Community” Internet Archive, December 1, 2012.

¹⁰ “U.S. Relations with United Arab Emirates - United States Department of State.” *U.S. Department of State*

¹¹ “Reliable Allies for 41 Years.” *UAE Embassy in Washington, DC*, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

diplomatic relations were established, bilateral cooperation between the two continued to grow. According to the US Department of State, “The United States and the UAE enjoy strong bilateral cooperation on a full range of issues including defense, non-proliferation, trade, law enforcement, energy policy, and cultural exchange.”¹²

According to officials, the US and the UAE have built an alliance on the three pillars of security, prosperity, and a common outlook in the Middle East.¹³ The promotion of these pillars has created a sense of bilateral cooperation between the two states.

Areas of Cooperation

According to the UAE’s Embassy in the US, the two countries are committed to promoting peace and security within the Middle East in order to counter religious extremism and threats to regional stability.¹⁴ Each state’s military trains together and remains in regular coordination, as “UAE ports host more U.S. Navy ships than anywhere else outside the United States.”¹⁵ Over the last 25 years, the US and the UAE have partnered in many military coalition actions in order to further each states’ national security interests. The UAE supported the US role in the Tanker War in the 1980’s, the Somalian intervention in 1992, the Bosnia-Kosovo conflict in the 1990s,¹⁶ provided financial and logistical assistance to the US during Operation Desert Storm,¹⁷ supplied humanitarian aid for the US war in Afghanistan, and it supported US military actions in the War on Terrorism.¹⁸ In the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Key Areas of Bilateral Cooperation.” *UAE Embassy in Washington, DC*, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Key Areas of Bilateral Cooperation.” *UAE Embassy in Washington, DC*, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. “In the UAE, the United States Has a Quiet, Potent Ally Nicknamed 'Little Sparta'.” *The Washington Post*. WP Company, November 9, 2014.

War on Terrorism, the UAE focusses its efforts and counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), who are mainly located in Yemen, with the support of the US. More recently, “the UAE has supported the Trump Administration policy of pressuring Iran economically, politically, and militarily.”¹⁹

The US and the UAE have partnered to hinder the flow of funds, foreign fighters, and weapons to terrorist groups such as AQAP. At the same time, the UAE has criminalized terrorist groups using the internet to “promote their ideologies and finance their activities”.²⁰ The UAE Embassy in the US argues that the two countries’ partnership promotes prosperity in the region and has led to exponential growth in trade and economic cooperation between them.

Economically, the UAE is the US’ largest export market within the Middle East and North Africa region.²¹ Bilateral trade between the US and the UAE grew from \$5.22 billion in 2004 to \$24.5 billion in 2018. Over the last decade, the UAE has purchased more than \$20 billion in US defense hardware and services, making them one of the largest Foreign Military Sales customers of the US.²² Gathered from these numbers, the UAE has made significant investments in the US economy over the last 30 years. This has provided liquidity to US markets, supported growth for US companies, and aided job security for US workers.²³ Additionally, on a smaller economic frame, more than 1,000 US firms operate in the country and frequently use the UAE as a regional base

¹⁹ “The United Arab Emirates (UAE): Issues for U.S. Policy.” Accessed November 30, 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “U.S. Relations with United Arab Emirates.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 4 Nov. 2019

²² “Key Areas of Bilateral Cooperation.” *UAE Embassy in Washington, DC*, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

²³ “Key Areas of Bilateral Cooperation.” *UAE Embassy in Washington, DC*, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

for business acquisition throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia.²⁴

Alleged “No Spy” Contract with the UAE

According to an article published by Reuters in 2019, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) does not collect HUMINT on the UAE. This information has not been officially verified, but Reuters claimed that it obtained this information from former government officials, of which at least three served in the CIA.

If the CIA’s “hands-off practice” with the UAE is indeed factual, it would put the UAE on an extremely short list of countries where the CIA allegedly takes a similar approach—namely, the four other members of the 5 Eyes Alliance: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. According to the former CIA sources, the US has CIA officers collecting HUMINT in almost every other country in the world.²⁵

However, according to the article, the US Intelligence Community (US IC) does not completely ignore the UAE. Allegedly, the NSA still collects electronic intelligence (ELINT) in the country, which is typically a lower-reward type of intelligence, whereas HUMINT can be the most valuable and difficult-to-obtain information. Since HUMINT is gathered using human sources, it can come with risks to those involved—but it can also produce extremely valuable intelligence regarding the intentions of specific targets. ELINT is collected through less risky channels, such as satellites, but it can be less rewarding because many countermeasures can be employed in order to avoid ELINT collection, and ELINT cannot collect the intentions of a target.

²⁴ “U.S. Relations with United Arab Emirates.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 4 Nov. 2019

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The CIA, the NSA and the White House declined to comment on these alleged practices regarding the UAE. The UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the US Embassy there also declined to comment.²⁶

UAE as a “Rogue State”

Operating under the assumption that Reuters' sources are correct and that there is a “no spy” agreement between the US and the UAE, many intelligence officials gave their opinions of why this agreement should be terminated. The main reason they used was that the UAE is commonly described as a “rogue state.”

The UAE is an influential actor in the Middle East and beyond—it has been known to intervene in wars and regional politics. Additionally, many of these interventions have run counter to US policies. For example, the UAE finances the opposition to the UN-recognized government in Libya. The UAE is also involved in the economic blockade against Qatar. Intelligence officials argue through these examples that UAE actions are not always aimed at furthering peace and stability.

In Sudan, the UAE secretly supported a coup on the former government of Omar al-Bashir, while they publicly supported Bashir and pledged \$3 billion in assistance to Sudan that apparently never arrived at Sudan's Central Bank. While the UAE's role in this conflict may have contradicted US interests, officials did not solidify any diplomatic plans to end their involvement and instead released sharply worded statements condemning the violence while stating that “their hands were

²⁶ Roston, Aram. “Why the CIA Doesn't Spy on the UAE.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters

ties”.²⁷

In Yemen, the UAE aligned with Saudi Arabia in a coalition of nations fighting against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. In order to counter Iran, the US backed the joint team of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in pressuring Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen. The UAE received international criticism for its role in the war and, worried its actions might entangle it into a war with Iran, pulled most of its troops out of Yemen and started to engage more with Iran.²⁸ The US also spoke out against the UAE’s role in the Yemen war, over its use of air strikes in that have killed thousands of civilians and brought about a humanitarian crisis within the state. The US Congress enacted the War Powers Resolution in April of 2019 in order to halt the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but US President Donald Trump vetoed the measure.²⁹ In March of 2019, CNN reported that US weapons sold to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the coalition were transferred to al-Qaeda linked fighters within Yemen. This violated the terms of the arms sales between the US and the UAE.³⁰ It also contradicted the US-UAE diplomatic relationship as a pillar of security in the Middle East and Africa.

The UAE also aided a Libyan military campaign, headed by Khalifa Haftar, aiming to topple Libya’s United Nations-recognized government, the Government of National Accord (GNA). The UAE’s aid in Libya included intelligence sharing, media support, and political and financial backing. The UAE’s military was direct involved in the conflict through the use of air bombs and

²⁷ Lynch, Justin, and Robbie Gramer. “Arab States Foment Sudan Chaos While U.S. Stands By.” *Foreign Policy*, Foreign Policy, 8 July 2019

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Younes, Ali. “Analysis: The Divergent Saudi-UAE Strategies in Yemen.” *UAE News / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 31 Aug. 2019

³⁰ Elbagir, Nima, et al. “US Arms Sold to Saudi Arabia and UAE End up in Wrong Hands.” *CNN*, Cable News Network

the supply of military weapons, aircraft, and vehicles to the Haftar forces. These actions violated a UN arms embargo on Libya and significantly strengthened Khalifa Haftar's movement.³¹ The US' position on this involvement was again one of ambiguity as Washington officially supported the GNA.³²

Abroad, the UAE has started to form strategic ties with Russia and China. These ties have included strategic partnerships for cooperation on security, trade, and oil markets. The UAE and China signed multiple memorandums of understanding (MoU) and announced sixteen total agreements that would be enacted within the states. These agreements have included the increase of bilateral trade and the UAE's defense spending in China's weaponized drone market.³³

Also running counter to US interests, the UAE and Russia have held conversations regarding joint cooperation for international issues of shared interest. Much like the UAE's partnership with China, many direct visits have been made between the two states' leaders. The two countries signed a declaration for cooperation on political, economic, cultural, and security issues. In 2017, the UAE awarded a \$708 million contract to the Russian agency, Rosoboron export, for anti-armor missiles. Trade between these two states, after this agreement, had increased from \$161 million in 2015 to \$217 million in 2017.³⁴

Because the US allegedly does not collect HUMINT on the UAE, it may not know what the UAE's

³¹ El-Gamaty, Guma. "Qatar, the UAE and the Libya Connection." *Libya / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 12 June 2017

³² Malsin, Jared. "Libya's Tripoli Government Blames U.A.E. for Deadly Airstrike." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 4 July 2019

³³ Salles, Marcus. "US Alliance with Gulf Decays as UAE Strengthens Ties with China and Russia." *Modern Diplomacy*, Modern Diplomacy, 5 Aug. 2019

³⁴ Salles, Marcus. "US Alliance with Gulf Decays as UAE Strengthens Ties with China and Russia." *Modern Diplomacy*, Modern Diplomacy, 5 Aug. 2019

intentions are. In regions like Sudan, Yemen, and Libya, the UAE could be further involved in activities that run counter to US interests. As shown in these examples, the UAE has run counter to US policies at times, and not knowing the UAE's intentions could possibly create a dangerous intelligence gap, according to the aforementioned intelligence officials.

US Intelligence Collection on European Allies

Germany

Other than the Five Eyes members, the US has been caught collecting on other European allies. One of the most recent and largely covered examples of this includes allegations of the US intercepting communications of Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel.³⁵ The National Security Agency allegedly tapped these communications from Angela Merkel, her closest advisors, her predecessors, and 69 other top German officials.

US President Barack Obama described the US and Germany as “inseparable allies,”³⁶ but the two countries continued to spy on each other. Since the election of US President Donald Trump, however, the US and Germany seem to be disagreeing more on key policies—Trump pulled the US out of the JCPOA, but Germany continued to support it; Trump has accused Germany of targeting the US with “unfair economic policies,”³⁷ and there is increased criticism from the US over Germany's plan for a gas pipeline with Russia. The US imposed sanctions on the German

³⁵ Connolly, Kate. “Germany Summons US Ambassador over New Spying Claims.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, July 2, 2015.

³⁶ Berlin, Reuters in. “NSA Tapped German Chancellery for Decades, WikiLeaks Claims.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, July 8, 2015.

³⁷ Deutsche Welle. “US-German Conflicts - What You Need to Know: DW: 11.06.2018.” DW.COM. Accessed December 24, 2019.

companies constructing the Russian natural gas pipeline. These sanctions were met with strong opposition from both Germany and the European Union.³⁸

In addition to these disagreements, there have been cases that have made collecting intelligence on Germany arguably critical to US national security—for example, the need for intelligence on the 9/11 hijackers who planned their attacks while they were in Germany.³⁹ The cell of al-Qaeda operatives based in Hamburg, Germany included Mohamed Atta, who was the leader of the four hijacking teams for 9/11. German intelligence agencies were allegedly tracking them since 1998, and some American analysts claim that the Germans missed critical evidence that could have stopped the attacks.⁴⁰

Austria

Another example of the US collecting on its allies is Austria. Austria is a NATO member and according to the US State Department, “The US and Austria share many common values and common perspectives, including a support for human rights...and a shared vision of peace and freedom for all.”⁴¹

However, Austria’s government is internationally accused of being pro-Russia. The Freedom Party (FPO), the previously ruling far-right party in Austria, and Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party

³⁸ Schmitz, Rob. “Germany Reacts To U.S. Sanctions On Gas Pipeline.” *NPR*, NPR, 19 Dec. 2019,

³⁹ Frantz, Douglas, and Desmond Butler. “GERMANS LAY OUT EARLY QAEDA TIES TO 9/11 HIJACKERS.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 24, 2002.

⁴⁰ Butler, Desmond. “Germans Were Tracking Sept. 11 Conspirators as Early as 1998, Documents Disclose.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, January 18, 2003.

⁴¹ “U.S. Relations with Austria - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State.

held a formal cooperation agreement together.

Earlier this year, the Austrian government collapsed because of a leaked video showing a leading party member of the FPÖ offering “lucrative public contracts in exchange for campaign support” from the niece of a Russian oligarch.⁴² The accused party members resigned, and snap elections were held. The FPÖ did not get re-elected in the most recent elections in September.

Recently, in response to Austria’s government and intelligence services taking a more “eastern” and pro-Russian approach, UK and Dutch intelligence agencies have “heavily restricted the amount of intelligence they share with Austria,” out of fear that Austria might leak western intelligence to Russia.⁴³

Historically, Vienna has been named the world’s largest espionage hub because of its location between “East and West.”⁴⁴ Vienna reportedly has “the highest density of [foreign intelligence] agents in the world”.⁴⁵ Therefore, it is highly likely that the US has an intelligence presence there as well. In 2015, Austria filed a legal complaint over US spying suspicions. It claims that the NSA spied on Austrian authorities and defense firms.⁴⁶

France

The US has also spied on France, even though the US State Department describes US-French

⁴² Oltermann, Philip. “Austrian Government Collapses after Far-Right Minister Fired.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, May 20, 2019.

⁴³ “UK, Dutch Spy Agencies Curb Intel Flow to Austria over Russia Ties: MP.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, April 9, 2019.

⁴⁴ Schwab, Philippe. “Spy-Hub Vienna: Secret Agents Flock to Vienna - WELT.” DIE WELT. WELT, November 17, 2011.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Austria Files Legal Complaint over German-U.S. Spying Suspicions.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, May 5, 2015.

relations as “active and friendly,”⁴⁷ and that the two countries share “common values and have parallel policies on most political, economic, and security issues.”⁴⁸ Additionally, the US and France are two of five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The US and France are rivals in economic and trade relations and have disagreed on some major policies. At the recent NATO Summit in London, Trump and Macron (the French President) clashed over the role of NATO, Turkey’s role in Syria, and over Islamic State (IS) fighters.⁴⁹ Another key policy causing controversy between the two countries is the continued French support for the JCPOA after the US withdrew from it last year.

In 1975, French companies allegedly began supplying nuclear hardware to Iran under the Shah’s regime.⁵⁰ This agreement between France and Iran created the company SOFIDIF. Uranium enrichment in France is conducted by the international EURODIF group. Through SOFIDIF, Iran put up over US \$1 billion in 1975 – taking over a 10% share in EURODIF. In return, Iran was to receive 10% of the produced enriched uranium.⁵¹

As of 2006, “SOFIDIF still exists, still holds the same share in EURODIF and is still active.”⁵² Therefore, 10% of EURODIF is still held by Iran. In other words, “Iran makes considerable amounts of money in dividends – tens of millions of euros per year.”⁵³

⁴⁷ “U.S. Relations with France - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Nato Summit: Trump and Macron Clash in London.” BBC News. BBC, December 3, 2019.

⁵⁰ Vaez, Ali, and Karim Sadjadpour. *Iran’s Nuclear Odyssey: Costs and Risks*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013. pg. 14

⁵¹ Schneider, Mycle. “Nuclear France Abroad - NIRS,” May 2009. pg. 20

⁵² Ibid. 20.

⁵³ Ibid. 5.

The US has a strong support for nonproliferation in Iran. These allegations of French companies supplying nuclear hardware to Iran form the argument that collecting intelligence within this US ally was critical to US national security.

These examples show that the US has, in the past, gained supposedly valuable intelligence by collecting on its European allies. Even though these allies are considered “western” countries and have similar interests, the US still collects on them. Is the US missing out on more valuable intelligence by not collecting on other allies in Europe, such as those in the Five Eyes Alliance?

US Collection on Non-European Allies

Saudi Arabia

Even though the US is allegedly not spying on the UAE, the CIA is reportedly operating within the territory of its neighbor, Saudi Arabia. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are both considered US allies. Both of these countries are important oil producers, large consumers of US weapons, and highly influential in the region. However, the US allegedly only conducts HUMINT operations in one of these countries—Saudi Arabia.⁵⁴

The US does consider Saudi Arabia an important ally in the region. Saudi Arabia provides the US with oil and increased influence in the region, while the US provides Saudi with security, arms, and access to global markets.⁵⁵ US President Donald Trump has been an advocate for better relations and cooperation with Saudi Arabia. However, US-Saudi relations have been increasingly

⁵⁴ Roston, Aram. “Why the CIA Doesn't Spy on the UAE.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, August 26, 2019.

⁵⁵ Danephron. “Resetting the U.S. Relationship with Saudi Arabia.” Foreign Policy, September 23, 2019.

criticized in America and the international community. Allegations that Saudi Arabia is backing elements within al-Qaeda and ISIS and the fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi citizens, Saudi Arabia using US weapons in the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and now the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, have all posed strains on the alliance.⁵⁶ The US IC also uses these reasons to justify spying and collecting on Saudi Arabia.

The US IC trains many foreign intelligence agencies in order to establish and maintain ties to foreign partners. However, because of “fears that the kingdom doesn’t yet have proper safeguards to prevent lawless covert operations like the killing last year of Post contributing columnist Jamal Khashoggi,” the US has rejected a plan to train the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP), the Saudi intelligence service that is tasked with external intelligence.⁵⁷

After the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year, Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), the Saudi Crown Prince, has announced the restructuring of Saudi’s intelligence agencies. These changes include creating four new intelligence departments and reorganizing the existing organizational structures in order to account for any further gaps.⁵⁸ However, even after the alleged restructuring of their services, the US claims that it would be more of a risk than a benefit to train their intelligence services. This points to distrust between the two countries’ respective intelligence communities.

Also contributing to distrust between the countries are Saudi Arabia’s extensive intelligence

⁵⁶ “U.S.-Saudi Arabia Relations.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations.

⁵⁷ Ignatius, David. “Opinion | Why the State Department Rejected a Plan to Train Saudi Intelligence.” The Washington Post. WP Company, December 12, 2019.

⁵⁸ “Saudi Crown Prince Presides over Committee to Restructure Intelligence Agency: SPA.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, October 25, 2018.

collection activities within the US. In 2019, the Human Rights Council of the UN released a report on the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. In this report, it was revealed that when Khashoggi was seeking refuge in the US, Saudi Arabia conducted intelligence gathering operations that targeted him. In another example, in November 2019, US prosecutors alleged that “Saudi officials coordinated an effort to recruit Twitter employees to look up the private data of thousands of Twitter accounts.”⁵⁹ Saudi Arabia was allegedly trying to gain access to Saudi government critics and journalists. Two Saudi citizens and one Saudi official was charged. In another case of Saudi Arabia’s intelligence collection operations conducted inside the US was Saudi Arabia’s hacking of Jeff Bezos’ phone. Jeff Bezos, Amazon billionaire and owner of the Washington Post, had his phone hacked after allegedly receiving a WhatsApp message from MBS himself. According to the investigation, the Washington Post owner was targeted five months before murder of Jamal Khashoggi, who was an analyst for the Washington Post.⁶⁰

Turkey

Turkey is another example of the US conducting HUMINT operations on one of its allies in the region. Turkey is a NATO ally and an ally to the US. However, in recent years, Turkey has opposed US foreign policy objectives on numerous occasions. Subsequently, relations between the US and Turkey have become more tense.

Turkey has been accused of allegedly backing elements within al-Qaeda and the Islamic States since 2012. Turkish recruiters for these Islamist organizations were relatively open with their

⁵⁹ “Saudi Arabia Recruited Twitter Workers to Spy on Users, U.S. Says.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, November 6, 2019.

⁶⁰ Kirchgaessner, Stephanie. “Jeff Bezos Hack: Amazon Boss's Phone 'Hacked by Saudi Crown Prince'.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, January 22, 2020.

activities. The Islamic State was able to link itself to Turkish networks that contributed to smuggling jihadists to Syria—taking advantage of the open border between Turkey and Syria. Turkey only started cracking down on Islamic State networks within the country in 2015, during the Islamic State’s massive territorial gain in Syria and Iraq.⁶¹

More recently, in July 2019, Turkey received a shipment of Russian weaponry after strong objections from the US. The US opposes this because it places Russian arms into a NATO ally’s control. This adds to the existing idea that Turkey is “drifting off into a non-Western alternative.”⁶² In response, the Trump administration suspended certain arms sales and trainings to Turkey. The latest example of Turkey opposing US foreign policy, however, was Turkey’s incursion into Kurdish-held northern Syria. The US had backed the Syrian Kurds in their fight against ISIS since 2014. Turkey announced its entrance into Kurdish territory as soon as the US announced it would withdraw its troops from the region—this marked the beginning of a battle between two US allies.⁶³

Israel

Israel is perhaps the most extensive example of US HUMINT collection on an “ally” in the region. According to the US State Department, “Israel has long been, and remains, America’s most reliable partner in the Middle East.”⁶⁴ However, there is an extremely long history of CIA activities and collection operations targeting Israel, and a long history of Mossad targeting the US. In an article

⁶¹ “Islamic State Networks in Turkey.” Atlantic Council Publications.

⁶² Gall, Carlotta. “Turkey Gets Shipment of Russian Missile System, Defying U.S.” The New York Times. The New York Times, July 12, 2019.

⁶³ Weise, Zia. “Turkey's Invasion of Syria Explained.” POLITICO. POLITICO, October 17, 2019.

⁶⁴ “U.S. Relations With Israel - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State.

published by the CIA, it states that spying among these two “friends” is more common than citizens might think.⁶⁵

In 1985, Jonathan Pollard, a US Navy intelligence analyst, was arrested by the FBI for giving Israel classified US information. Pollard remains the only American to receive a life sentence for spying for an American ally.⁶⁶ Before this, in 1982, the CIA had allegedly attempted to “penetrate Israel’s military intelligence community.”

In more recent years, the US has maintained an internationally controversial “pro-Israel” stance in the region since the election of US President Donald Trump, who moved the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and declared that Israeli settlements in West Bank are no longer inconsistent with international law.

Despite the seemingly closer relationship, in September 2019, there were reports from Washington DC saying that Israel “placed cellphone surveillance devices in sensitive locations around Washington, including near the White House.”⁶⁷ However, Israel denied these reports and US President Donald Trump also refused to believe them.

In the past and in recent times, the US has collected extensively on its allies in and around the Middle East. These examples indicate how the US prefers to collect on influential actors in the region, even if they are considered important and strategic allies. This raises the question—If the UAE falls into this description, why is the US allegedly not collecting on it? Furthermore, is the

⁶⁵ “I Spy, You Spy” Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency. 1987.

⁶⁶ Baker, Peter. “After 30 Years in Prison, Jonathan Pollard to Be Freed - but Not to Israel.” The New York Times. The New York Times, November 20, 2015.

⁶⁷ Eglash, Ruth. “Israel Denies Report That It Set up Spying Devices in Washington.” The Washington Post. WP Company, September 12, 2019.

lack of intelligence on the UAE threatening US national security interests?

Case Study: CIA Front Company, “Crypto AG”

On February 11th, 2020, the Washington Post published a groundbreaking article entitled “The Intelligence Coup of the Century.”⁶⁸ The article detailed the company known as “Crypto AG,” and exposed it as a CIA front company. This event serves as an important case study that can illustrate just how in-depth CIA HUMINT collection is, on both allies and adversaries.

Background

Crypto AG was not always a CIA front company. It was founded after WWII by Boris Hagelin who was interested in making encryption devices. Hagelin was a Russian man who fled Russia for the US in 1940 due to the war—after the war ended, he left for Switzerland to start his new company, Crypto AG. The relationship between Crypto AG and the CIA evolved over a long period of time.

It started after World War II, when the CIA caught wind of what Hagelin was producing in Switzerland. The encryption devices he sold were not as elaborate as the Enigma machines being used in Germany during WWII, but they were hand-powered and portable, making it easier for troops to use. Soon after that, the CIA was able to recruit Hagelin as an asset—he had an affinity for the US after having lived there and he also wanted its business for his new company.

Therefore, in exchange for the US’ business, Hagelin agreed to only sell his best equipment to

⁶⁸ “The CIA Secretly Bought a Company That Sold Encryption Devices across the World. Then Its Spies Sat Back and Listened.” The Washington Post. WP Company, February 11, 2020.

countries who were preapproved by the US, only if the US government would reimburse him for his lost revenue.

Then, in the mid-1960s, the deal between the CIA and Hagelin evolved. The CIA, now operating in coordination with the NSA, and Hagelin came to a new agreement in which the US government was allowed to alter and make changes to his machines. Crypto AG then came out with a new electronic model of the decryption devices that were mostly designed by the NSA.

Soon after this, however, the deal between the CIA and Hagelin again underwent changes. At a certain point, the CIA and NSA decided to take it a step further and make two versions of each model: a secure version for US allies, and less secure versions for non-US allies.

Crypto AG became a “dominant maker of encryption devices for decades, navigating waves of technology from mechanical gears to electronic circuits and, finally, silicon chips and software.”⁶⁹ The Switzerland-based company made millions of dollars and sold its (different, depending on if the customer was an ally or not) encryption devices to over 120 countries. They included Iran, military juntas in South America, India and Pakistan, and even the Vatican.

However, none of its customers knew that the company was run by the CIA. At times, “Crypto accounted for roughly 40 percent of the diplomatic cables and other transmissions by foreign governments that cryptanalysts at the NSA decoded and mined for intelligence.”⁷⁰ There were some suspicions of the company, but none had been proved or made public until the Washington Post published its article.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

The front company lasted for decades and was an extremely valuable asset to the US. It allowed the US to gain certain intelligence access, such as monitoring Iranian mullahs during the 1979 hostage crisis, giving critical intelligence to Britain regarding Argentina's military during the Falklands War, tracking the assassination attempts among South American dictators, and even catching Libyan government officials talking about their responsibility for the 1986 bombing of a Berlin disco. It is not certain if or at what time the CIA ended its involvement with the company.

Analysis

The CIA's involvement with Crypto AG went through different stages. At the beginning, it was not looking to actively collect intelligence on other countries. Instead, it created a "Denial Operation," an operation that was "designed to prevent adversaries from acquiring weapons or technology that would give them an advantage."⁷¹ The CIA and Crypto AG's founder agreed that it would only sell encryption devices to US-approved countries—countries that were US allies.

However, after the denial operation had been successful for a number of years, the CIA and Crypto AG decided to evolve their original agreement into an "active measure operation," where they were "actively selling devices that were engineered to betray their buyers."⁷²

The CIA sold this equipment to 120 countries, to both allies and non-allies. According to the article published by the Washington Post, however, there were select countries that knew about

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

the CIA's involvement—allegedly, the Five Eyes knew, as well as Switzerland and Germany.

It is clear that the US actively collected large amounts of intelligence on its non-allies abroad, but it is not clear to what extent the US collected on its allies. The US had easier access to allied information through this company, but did the US use it?

The Argument: Should the US Collect Intelligence on its Close Allies Abroad?

The United States does not collect intelligence against all countries with the same intensity. Members of the so-called 5 Eyes alliance are believed to be excluded—there are rumors of a “no-spy” agreement between the members, though, none of the rumors have been officially verified. Other than the members of this alliance, and now, allegedly, the UAE, the US still collects on its other close allies all around the world according to retired CIA intelligence officials.

The Argument *Against* Collection

Assuming that the rumors are true, and that the US does have “no spy” contracts with certain countries (the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and now, allegedly, the UAE), there are various strategic reasons why the US would choose to agree to these alliances.

The most important reason for these types of contracts is trust. When the US agrees not to spy on another country, it expects that country to do the same and reciprocate these non-collection activities for the US. Therefore, within the 5 Eyes alliance, the idea that the US does not collect HUMINT on Canada, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia comes with the expectation that Canada, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia do not collect HUMINT on the US.

Additionally, this gesture can build trust between the member countries and encourage greater

intelligence sharing and cooperation. For example, a 5 Eyes member may have strategic connections with specific national security interests that the US does not have access to. By building this trust, the US may be able to gain important intelligence otherwise unattainable through the other 5 Eyes member. Furthermore, if an ally were to catch another ally spying on it, it could severely damage trust and relations between the two countries—both in the world of intelligence and the world of diplomacy.

The Argument *for* Collection

The sections above listed many examples of the US collecting on its “close allies.” Each of these examples contain different reasons of why the US argues that it should collect intelligence on its allies.

In the case of Germany, part of the 14 Eyes alliance and a NATO member, its intelligence agencies failed to detect and stop the 9/11 hijackers who planned their attacks while they were in Germany. Collecting on allies abroad can be beneficial if those allies’ intelligence agencies drop the ball.

As for Austria, a NATO member, its government has become extensively tied to Russia. Because of this, many western countries have stopped sharing intelligence with Austria out of fear it will share it with Russia. In this case, the US argues that if it does not collect intelligence on its allies, there would be an extreme lack of intelligence if the ally turns into an adversary. Additionally, if the ally does turn into an adversary, would they share US intelligence with others?

France is a 9 Eyes member as well as a NATO member and its government has worked closely to US interests. However, businesses within France have been known to sell nuclear hardware to Iran. Here, the US makes the case that, although governments of allies might work to US interests, there

may be private sector activities within the country that are going against US interests.

Saudi Arabia and Israel are two examples of strategic alliances in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia provides the US with oil and increased influence in the region, while the US provides Saudi with security, arms, and access to global markets. Israel shares intelligence with the US on national security threats within the Middle East. However, both Saudi Arabia and Israel spy on the US extensively. Saudi Arabia has spied on the US when it came to the case of Khashoggi, has spied on US twitter users, and hacked the phone of Jeff Bezos. Israel has penetrated the US government and has stolen extensive amounts of intelligence. Therefore, the US makes the case that it should collect on allies because those allies might be collecting on the US.

Finally, Turkey, a NATO member, has just purchased a shipment of Russian weaponry after strong objections from the US. The US' takeaway from this case is that it should collect on allies because, when it comes to defense, every country has its own policy and may go against US interests.

A major thing to note is that there have been no known policy-damaging examples like these involving the 5 Eyes members.

Analysis

Not spying on allies abroad and sharing intelligence with them builds trust and cooperation. However, this can also lead to dangerous intelligence gaps and information leaks.

The 5 Eyes alliance, however, proves that it is worth the risk. Intelligence sharing between the now 5 Eyes countries dates back to the World Wars, where intelligence sharing between these allied countries was commonplace. Historically, they have been the US' oldest and most trusted allies.

There are no known instances of dangerous intelligence gaps from not collecting on them, no known cases of them spying on each other, and extensive examples of the benefits they have reaped from sharing intelligence with each other. It is clear that there is a high level of trust and cooperation between the members.

Of course, the 5 Eyes alliance still comes with risks. With the extensive level of intelligence sharing between the 5 countries, a leak in one country's system can leak intelligence from all 5 countries. For example, the Cambridge Spies were a ring of Soviet spies that worked inside both MI6 and US intelligence agencies in order to give information to the Soviet Union. There was an example of this more recently in Canada—a man with access to 5 Eyes intelligence was just charged with espionage for giving its classified information away. However, these are risks that could happen to any country even if the alliance was not in place.

Overall, the 5 Eyes alliance is trustworthy. However, extending this “no spy” and intelligence sharing alliance is when problems seem to arise because, as shown in this paper, even the US' close allies have spied on it and have run counter to its interests at times.

The newest and perhaps most important example of the US trying to extend this alliance and potentially causing problems is the UAE's alleged addition to the 5 Eyes. Therefore, the US allegedly does not spy on the UAE. Because of this and the UAE's controversial extensive involvement in the rest of the world, there are critics who claim that not collecting intelligence on the UAE is creating a dangerous and possibly expanding knowledge gap—that America is missing out on critical pieces of intelligence.

The US and the UAE have had historically strong and friendly relations. Economically, the UAE

is the US' largest export market within the Middle East and North Africa region. Militarily, the UAE and the US enjoy strong cooperation, as the UAE ports host more US Navy ships than anywhere else outside the United States. This fact could be due to a number of things: the US' interest in oil in the region, or, especially recently with renewed tensions between the US and Iran, security purposes in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman.

Though the US and UAE have strong relations, critics within the US IC claim that, because the UAE acts as a "rogue state" within the region, the US is creating a dangerous intelligence gap by not collecting on it. For example, In Sudan, the UAE supported a coup on the former government of Omar al-Bashir, it has taken a leading role in the war in Yemen, it has aided in the overthrow of the UN-recognized government in Libya, and it has begun to increase relations with Russia and China. All of these are examples of how the UAE's interests seem to be diverting from the US'.

National security experts have stated that diplomatic ties and an alignment of national interests has been enough to excuse the lack of intelligence collection on the UAE. Others believe, though, that the UAE is moving past the focus of partnership and exchange with the US and towards a focus of self-preservation in an effort to strengthen their monarchy. If the US spies on some of its closest allies, such as Germany and France, why does it allegedly not do so on the UAE?

Conclusion

Despite the existing and possible risks, the 5 Eyes has proven to be a productive and valuable intelligence sharing and, allegedly, "no spying" alliance. It is clear that there is a high level of trust and cooperation between members. However, issues have risen when trying to extend this level of trust to other allies, as listed before in examples such as Germany, France, Austria, etc... Now that

the UAE has allegedly been added to the extremely short “no spy” list, it raises the question of worth. Increasing cooperation between the US and UAE could prove to be valuable, but it also opens the door to possibly threaten US national security interests.

The question of “Should the US Collect Intelligence on its Close Allies?” is extremely difficult to research and analyze. The part that made this topic so difficult was the extreme lack of information. Very little information is not classified when it comes to how the US conducts intelligence operations abroad. There is hardly any publicly available information on the Five Eyes alliance in general, and only a few people within the US IC have stated that the US does not collect on the UAE. Therefore, the analyses on these subjects were made with the assumption that the small number of available sources were accurate.

Of course, there is no clear or correct answer to this question. Even within the US IC—to those who hold the clearance level to make more informed opinions—there are varying outlooks and opinions to this question.

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