



OSINT HANDBOOK

Introduction

Types of Open Sources

OSINT Flow

OSINT Advantages and Limits

Security Culture



”... amid the globalization of information and communication means, the so-called Open Source Intelligence has acquired increasing importance in managing current security risks.”

George Cristian Maior
Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service

I. INTRODUCTION

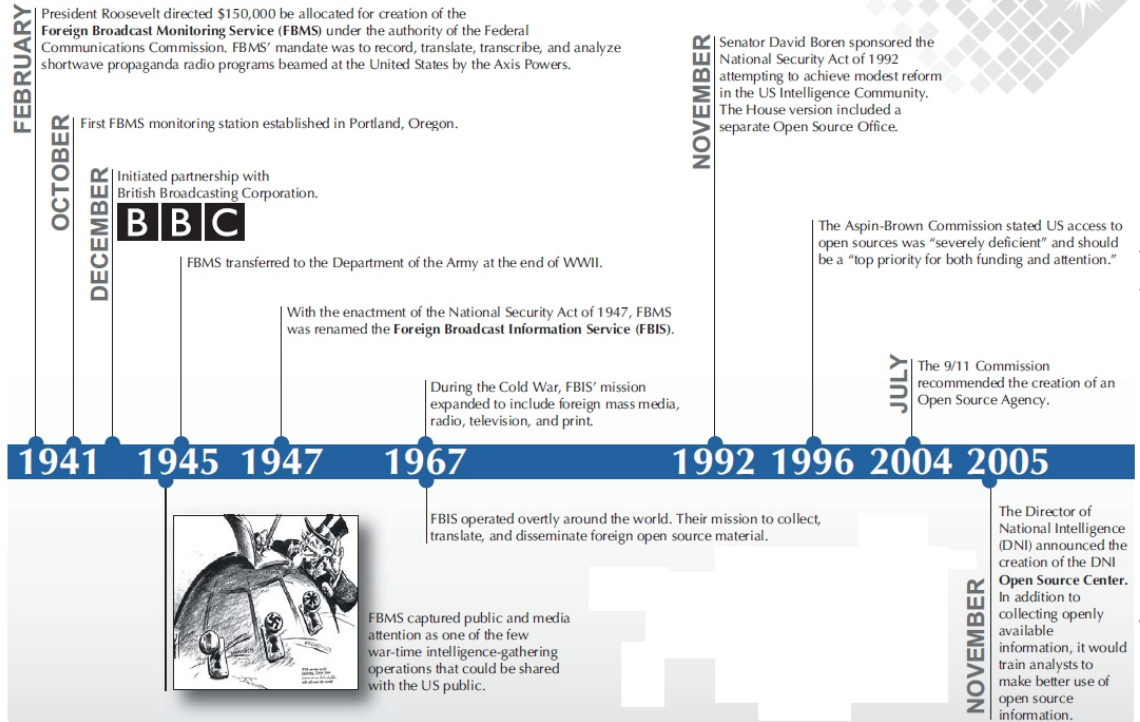
Definitions: OSD - OSINF - OSINT - OSINT- V

- Open Source Data (OSD) - radio/television shows, printings, raw signals, photographs, tape recordings, satellite imagery, and personal letters.
- Open Source Information (OSINF) - data which can be put together and processed in order to elaborate generic information documents - news reports, books, newspapers.
- Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) - results of a complex OSD and OSINF processing, implying identification, source validation, collection, corroboration and analysis, in order to elaborate national security-relevant products meeting intelligence requirements.
- Validated Open Source Intelligence (OSINT-V) - information with a high degree of certainty, being either elaborated by a professional analyst or originating in reliable open sources.

History

R

OSINT



Source: <http://www.opensource.gov>

Relevance

OSINT is estimated to account for 80% - 95% of all data used by the intelligence community worldwide.

It ensures:

- strategic historical and cultural knowledge;
- relevant operational information on infrastructure and current developments;
- tactically relevant commercial geospatial information, which cannot be obtained through other means.

II. TYPES OF OPEN SOURCES

Classic

- periodical publications - newspapers, magazines, books (specialty literature, directories), documentaries, leaflets, studies, maps, photographs;
- on-air broadcast radio and television stations;
- official data - government reports, budgets, demographic statistics, hearings, parliamentary debates, press conferences, speeches;
- data and information from professional and academic circles - conferences, symposia, documents elaborated by think-tanks, academic papers and works of experts from different fields of activity;
- geospatial data - (printed) satellite imagery, maps, atlases, geodetic and topographic data, environment data;
- gray literature.

New Media

Any digital media product which is interactive and disseminated through IT networks or all computer-processed texts, sounds, images, and graphical elements gathered in data bases (encyclopedias, libraries, blogs, fora, virtual worlds, social networks, online editions of classic media, information portals, file sharing portals, etc.).

Social media (the content generated by the users and the tools used to create and post it) is one of the most important *new media* segments.

Social media categories:

- communication (blogs, microblogs);
- collaboration (wikis, answer websites);
- recommendation (social news sites, bookmarking services);
- multimedia websites (audio, picture and video sharing, livecasting etc.);
- virtual worlds (Second Life, World of Warcraft).

Social networks can be considered a special media category, as they can be used:

- to generate content;
- as recommendation tools;
- to share multimedia files.

III. OSINT FLOW

The OSINT management implies the following stages:

- planning and direction;
- research, search and collection; information processing and exploitation;
- production; dissemination and feedback.

This process consists of several steps of a major importance:

- identifying the necessary information to meet the assigned tasks, observing the principles *know who knows* and *know where to look for*;
- selecting from the reliable and unreliable sources, the valid and invalid ones, the relevant and irrelevant ones (*know what's what*);
- filtering information (*know what's hot*);
- disseminating the resulted information (*know who's who*) in due time, under secure conditions, in a customer-friendly format.

The open sources, similar to the classified sources, must be processed and analyzed in order to extract important, timely, relevant, and trustworthy information as the translation and human assessment represent one of the most important ways to exploit and process information.

The classification and access level represents an issue of particular interest as far as the open source exploitation and intelligence product elaboration are concerned.

To understand the need to classify information, a difference should be made between the information per se and its collection method:

IF		THEN			
<i>Information Source</i>	<i>Collection Means</i>	<i>Source Metadata</i>	<i>Metadata Collector</i>	<i>Collected Information</i>	<i>Intelligence Report</i>
confidential	open	classified or controlled unclassified	classified or controlled unclassified	classified information or controlled unclassified	classified or controlled unclassified
	clandestine	classified	classified	unclassified	unclassified
open	open	unclassified	controlled unclassified	unclassified	classified, controlled unclassified or unclassified
	unknown		classified or controlled unclassified		

Source: <http://info.publicintelligence.net/fmi2-22-9.pdf>

IV. OSINT ADVANTAGES AND LIMITS

Although OSINT does not substitute the traditional intelligence disciplines, it entails distinct advantages supporting them.

OSINT product advantages:

- imply relatively low costs as well as a short collection time;
- support the multisource intelligence analysis by guiding the collection process;
- play a guiding role in the analysis stage, identifying some necessary elements to understand the context;
- provide data that cannot be always obtained from secret sources;
- facilitate access to certain types of expertise, not always available to an intelligence service;
- can also represent dissemination channels.

Using open source information can lower the risk of compromising sensitive sources.

OSINT product limits:

- information overload;
- manipulation.

V. SECURITY CULTURE



As far as the relation among the intelligence services and that between intelligence and society are concerned, the '*need to share*' syntagma, which has replaced the '*need to know*' principle, highlights that every citizen should acknowledge that the state becomes more secure and the information more powerful only if shared.

Similar to the training efforts in the intelligence field undertaken in the US (Henley Putnam University) and Great Britain (King's College), which promote, in their curricula, the exploitation of open sources, the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work within the University of Bucharest, in partnership with the Romanian Intelligence Service, has been organizing, since 2008, the Master Course in 'Information Analysis', whose goal is to improve the society's analytical expertise.

The superior knowledge acquired through the intelligence private sector/ academic circles cooperation fundamentally contributes to strengthening democratic values and improving the response to national security challenges and opportunities to promote national interests.



ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Public Relations Office,
Bucharest,
14D Liberty Boulevard, 5th district
Phone: (+40)21.410.60.65
Fax: (+40)21.410.25.45

www.sri.ro