

Gathering Intelligence

Intelligence or information?

Defining intelligence and differentiating it from mere information is not an easy task. In a security context, intelligence assists the receiver in identifying threats, i.e. it helps him or her to become aware of the necessity to take action. Although publicly available information is helpful for background purposes, usually the best way to find out about the threat that some organisations and individuals pose is to obtain secret intelligence about their activities. Security and intelligence services gather this information and use it to find out about organisations of interest and their key personalities, infrastructure, intentions, plans, and capabilities. Collecting intelligence to build up a detailed knowledge of threats to the country is at the heart of MI5's work. The assessment and investigation process helps us to make decisions about how to respond to these threats and what protective measures to take.

Spies, officers or agents?

Spies working for states fall into two categories: intelligence officers and agents.

Intelligence officers are members of intelligence services. They will be highly trained in espionage techniques and the use of agents. They may operate openly, declaring themselves as representatives of foreign intelligence services to their host nation, or covertly under the cover of other official positions such as diplomatic staff or trade delegates. Some intelligence officers may operate under non-official cover to conceal the fact that they work for an intelligence service – posing as a business person, student or journalist for example. In some cases they may operate in “deep cover” under false names and nationalities. Such spies are dubbed “illegals” because they operate without any of the protections offered by diplomatic immunity.

In the UK, an agent, more formally known as a “covert human intelligence source”, is someone who secretly provides information to an intelligence officer. They will probably not be a professional “spy” but may have some basic instruction in espionage methods. An agent may be motivated by a wide variety of personal or ideological factors.

Confusion often arises between what is meant by an officer and an agent. Other countries use the same terminology in different ways. In the United States, for instance, an agent is a member of an intelligence or security agency such as the FBI or CIA. Such agencies call a covert human intelligence source an “informant” rather than an “agent”.

Intelligence officers seek to gather covert intelligence directly and to recruit agents to obtain intelligence on their behalf. The methods used by intelligence officers vary widely, and are often limited only by their ingenuity. They will often take advantage of the latest technology, using it to eavesdrop, tap telephone calls and communicate secretly. However, the human relationship between intelligence officers and their agents remains a key element of espionage.

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READING

I Tick all of the correct answers based on the information provided in the text.

1. The difference between information and intelligence in the work of security and intelligence services is that

- intelligence is always secret
- intelligence helps them decide what poses a threat
- it is not always clear what intelligence is
- only information is used to learn about organizations and people of interest
- all of the above

2. Security and intelligence agencies such as MI5 use intelligence to

- counter threats
- protect national security
- gather information about individuals and organisations
- decide what action to take
- identify threats
- all of the above

3. An MI5 intelligence officer teaching engineering at a university in France

- is called an 'illegal'
- is operating under non-official cover
- has diplomatic immunity
- is operating in "deep cover"
- all of the above

4. Covert human intelligence sources

- are called agents in the UK
- are called agents in the US
- are employed by security and intelligence services
- are all trained spies
- are called "informants" if they work for the CIA or the FBI
- are the most important source of intelligence in espionage
- all of the above

II Complete the sentences with the appropriate form of the words in capital letters.

1. Why do American footballers wear so much _____ (PROTECT) clothing? Is it really such a dangerous sport?
2. Can you _____ (DIFFERENT) between reliable and unreliable information you find on the Internet?
3. Our team will make a recommendation based on their _____ (ASSESS) of threat levels.
4. A major covert and overt _____ (INVESTIGATE) is taking place, involving police and security officials.
5. In the past, _____ (SPY) activity was typically directed towards obtaining political and military intelligence.
6. Agent handlers recruit agents and work with them _____ (COVERT).
7. MI5's mission is the _____ (PROTECT) of national security.
8. In 2012, Miller became an _____ (INFORM) for the FBI.

III Combine the verb TAKE and one of the expressions in the box to rephrase each sentence.

action – root – place – notes – offence – effect – measures – notice – office
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0. We need to do something immediately or suffer the consequences.
We need to take action immediately or suffer the consequences.
1. When did the attack happen?

2. The new Education Act began to be applied on 1 July 2016.

3. Dwain was only 39 when she became Secretary of State.

4. We need to do something to ensure this never happens again.

5. We must not allow extremist ideologies to become widely accepted in our community.

6. Do you usually try to write down what the teacher is saying in class?

7. Sensitive people get offended easily.

8. Don't pay attention to them. They are just jealous.

LISTENING

IV You are going to hear six people talk about working in UK's intelligence agencies. Connect the ideas on the right with the correct service or speaker. There will be one additional idea in each question that you do not need to use.

1. According to the interviewer's introduction, what does each intelligence agency do?

A	MI5	
B	MI5 or SIS	
C	GCHQ	

1	gathers intelligence outside of the UK
2	collaborates with foreign countries on behalf of the UK
3	deals with threats to national security such as terrorism
4	monitors communications

2. What does each officer do or what have they done over the course of their career?

A	JO	
B	JOHN	
C	LILLY	
D	AMEESHA	
E	KATE	
F	DIA	

1	has worked on preventing the spread of WMD
2	works as an analyst
3	is still in training to become an intelligence officer
4	has changed jobs several times in over 15 years
5	currently teaches other people how to recruit agents
6	transferred from another government job
7	briefly worked with an international organization or organizations

3. Why did each person decide to do an interview with the BBC?

A	JOHN	
B	JO	
C	AMEESHA	

1	to show people that intelligence officers are not very different from them
2	to make the general public more familiar with the work of intelligence agencies
3	to give the public a sense of how exciting and extraordinary their job is
4	to encourage people to come work for these organizations

4. What does each person express about their job?

A	DIA	
B	JOHN	
C	LILLY	
D	AMEESHA	
E	KATE	

1	being surprised by the work of their colleagues
2	being annoyed because they had to learn new skills
3	being surprised about the extent and amount of the work done by their organization
4	feeling that something was strange about their job
5	being amazed and excited about working with real intelligence for the first time
6	being constantly amazed that they work where they work

You can find this video, titled *The Real Life of Spies* on BBC's website: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06pnd71>