

\*All gists in the following extract have been underlined

## **BULK DATA ACQUISITION, EXPLOITATION AND RETENTION**

Responsible officer: [redacted]

### **PURPOSE AND DEFINITION**

1. SIS acquires and exploits bulk data in order to produce operational intelligence and targeting leads. The following terms and definitions are used in this policy:

a. **Bulk data:** raw electronic information on multiple individuals or organisations, which may contain the details of untargeted individuals and which is sought or processed for intelligence purposes.

b. **Targeted data:** raw electronic information on targeted individuals or organisations [redacted] that does not fall into the category of Traditional Information.

c. **Traditional Information:** SIS's electronic corporate data [redacted] or intelligence reporting from other agencies (e.g SIGINT, liaison reporting).

### **CO-ORDINATION**

2. The relevant teams generate service-wide data acquisition and exploitation requirements in consultation with other operational teams, and prioritise requirements against current and future capability.

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW**

3. Bulk data, in particular, contain large amounts of personal information. In acquiring and exploiting personal data, SIS is subject to the Intelligence Services Act 1994 (ISA), the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) and the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). To comply with the statutory obligations, the acquisition, retention, use and disclosure of bulk data must be necessary, pursuant to SIS's statutory functions in the ISA, as exercised for one or more of the statutory purposes (in the interests of national security, the prevention and detection of serious crime, or to safeguard the economic well-being of the UK). The Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 provides a statutory basis that allows all disclosure to SIS for its functions to be lawful and any information disclosed for one of SIS's functions to be used for any other of its functions.

4. The Service at all times acts in accordance with the law. Exploitation of personal data amounts to an interference with privacy in ECHR terms, so in order to comply with the HRA and the ISA, SIS must ensure that its conduct in relation to each process is necessary and is proportionate to the operational need. The Service seeks to comply with the data protection principles in the DPA, but where it cannot do so for the purpose of safeguarding national security, its actions will be covered by the exemption for national security in section 28 DPA.

5. Acquiring, retaining, using and/or disclosing personal data will amount to conduct that can be examined and assessed for its lawfulness by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal and/or the Information Tribunal.

6. Accordingly, Service policy has been devised to comply with the law. This policy will be kept under review and updated when necessary or desirable.

## **SERVICE POLICY**

7. The relevant team is responsible for overall service information policy, which includes bulk data. A legal advisor oversees legal aspects of bulk data management.

8. Whilst the law applies to all data that SIS holds, different types of data have distinctive characteristics. As guiding principles:

a. **Bulk data** – Acquiring and processing bulk data may entail greater interference with privacy (as by its nature it will contain personal information of large numbers of individuals in whom the service has no interest). SIS must consider this intrusion carefully when assessing the necessity and proportionality of acquisition and exploitation. If there is a risk of embarrassment to HMG or if authorisation is required under the ISA, SIS will submit or seek other relevant authorisations on data acquisition. If a submission is unnecessary, a senior SIS officer is responsible for authorising bulk data acquisitions. A senior SIS officer is also responsible for authorising the transformation into an exploitable form of data that has been acquired [redacted]. (Authority is delegated to an alternative SIS official in the relevant SIS official's absence.) The Data Acquisition/Transformation Authorisation Form is at Appendix A.

b. **Targeted Data** – Data acquisition relating to specific targeted individuals or organisations is subject to operational procedures (Previous SIS policy guidance Chapters 1, 4, 28, 29 and 30). Where data is exploited systematically using SIS's data exploitation tools, it should be managed in accordance with the DPA principles, responsibility lying with the desk officer who acquired it (the Data Owner). Processes are specific to the data exploitation system used but must reflect these principles.

c. **Traditional Information** – Procedures governing traditional information acquisition are covered in previous SIS policy guidance Chapters 2, 3, 17, 18 and 19. The appropriate section is responsible for policy and procedures on data management for Traditional Information.

9. By its nature bulk data does not lend itself to compartmentalisation. (Data sets could be compartmentalised from each other but this would in most cases greatly undermine the usefulness of the data set as value is obtained by being able to search across multiple datasets.) SIS meets its legal obligations by other measures to ensure that data access and the use of exploitation tools are subject to management control and oversight. These include:

a. structuring data in such a way that identities are only revealed by specific searches, rather than browsing;

- b. applying an audit trail to the use of bulk data tools (reinforced by a log-on message, highlighting the active monitoring and auditing of the system and users' obligations);
- c. restricting access to data exploitation systems to those with a business need to search and access bulk data;
- d. pre-use training to ensure that all users of data exploitation systems understand the need to search for and access bulk data only when necessary and proportionate;
- e. pre-use requirement for all users to agree to and act in accordance with data exploitation system Security Operating Procedures (SOPs) and usage policy;
- f. requirement for each data set to have a data owner, responsible for ensuring that information (including intelligence reporting and data sharing) is transformed and exploited appropriately (see paras 11-19)
- g. biannual review of bulk data sets, including utility, necessity, proportionality and sensitivity, leading to the removal and destruction of data as appropriate (see para 20);
- h. backing up of datasets, to ensure integrity, and destruction or secure retention of original media (see para 25)

## **DATA ACQUISITION**

10. [redacted]. Teams are advised to co-ordinate acquisition with the relevant team, who can also advise on best practice. Data can also be obtained from GCHQ and BSS, through the appropriate process (see para 16).

## **DATA TRANSFORMATION**

11. Acquired data needs to be evaluated, transformed and loaded into the appropriate security-approved exploitation system (e.g. the database). This is initiated as part of the Data Acquisition/Transformation Authorisation Form workflow. Each dataset should have a file reference [redacted]. This reference should also be used for substantive reporting of intelligence derived from exploitation.

12. Each dataset must have a designated Data Owner, usually the officer who acquired it. The Data Owner is responsible for ensuring that data is transformed and exploited appropriately, and will be advised and supported by a data specialist. Unless the acquisition was the subject of a submission (in which case it is necessary only to quote the submission reference), the Data Owner must record within the Data Acquisition/Transformation Authorisation Form workflow the justification for exploiting the data, in terms of operational necessity and proportionality. The dataset must have a declared shelf-life, which can be extended against a valid and auditable justification.

## **EXPLOITATION AND REPORTING**

13. Once data has been transformed and is exploitable, the Data Owner is responsible for Action On (but may delegate this). Guidance is available on the database.

14. Information derived from data exploitation may be shared with other UK intelligence agencies, subject to appropriate source protection and handling caveats. Before passing data to a third party, staff must consult the Data Owner for Action On approval and an appropriate form of words – some data acquisition is sensitive and its

source may need to be disguised. Specific arrangements exist for reporting based on the database data – see the database user guide for further details.

15. To help justify the acquisition, exploitation and continued retention of individual sets of bulk data, the relevant team need to know any outcomes (eg new information on a target, other operation benefits or any lessons learned) from using the data. For this reason the database users are asked to add a reference to any such outcomes [redacted]. It is not necessary to include sensitive operational detail (although users will wish to know that access to the file is very restricted); but where operational security permits, copying a document to the file is the quickest way to do this. [redacted].

## **DATA SHARING**

16. Bulk data is shared between SIS, GCHQ and BSS through the relevant process, managed by the relevant team. This records what has been shared, covers the legal and policy basis for sharing and ensures that there are appropriate security controls. Sharing with UK agencies outside the relevant process requires Data Owners to be satisfied that these conditions have been met. In summary: an audit trail needs to be kept of data shared; sharing should serve a justifiable purpose and be proportionate to it; and the data must be securely held. The appropriate team, legal advisors and security officers can advise. Data **must not** be shared without the Data Owner's authorisation.

17. Bulk data can be shared with other third parties (eg a liaison partner) with the Data Owner's permission and subject to certain assurances. Were there to be such sharing, the assurances would require a liaison to handle the data securely, not to share it further without permission, and to share, as far as is practicable, results that have an impact on UK National Security.

18. Were data to be acquired from joint operations with partners (e.g. GCHQ/SIS operations), that data may be shared by the partner organisation without additional written legal assurances from SIS. Those parties involved are deemed to have jointly acquired the data and are both regarded as the data owner. Good practice requires that reliable records are kept on what data has been sent where.

19. Subject to these authorisations, the Data Transformation team will copy the data but it is the duty of the officer sharing the data to ensure that it is securely transferred. Security team guidance should be followed (see para 26).

## **DATA RETENTION REVIEW AND EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT**

20. To comply with legal obligations, a senior SIS officer is responsible for ensuring that bulk datasets on the database are reviewed every six months. The review body should include a senior SIS officer, a Legal Advisor, and members of the relevant team. External attendees may be invited on an ad hoc basis at SIS's discretion. Data is reviewed, against set criteria and assessments of both its intrusiveness and sensitivity, to ensure that:

(a) Data was acquired in lawful exercise of an SIS function;

(b) Each dataset is up to date for the purposes of exploitation, and does not comprise redundant or inaccurate data;

(c) Based on necessity and proportionality, and taking into account its utility, data needs to be retained (on the database or in storage) or destroyed.

21. The review mechanism will articulate the reason for each decision and its compliance with UK law. Data Owners will be consulted before any changes are made.

22. Some datasets may be unique (e.g. if repeat access is not guaranteed) but become obsolete or of little worth. However, if it is likely that they may be of future use, data can be retained off the database in storage. If a dataset has been completely replaced by a newer version, the older version will be destroyed.

23. To date there has been no external oversight of SIS's (or SIA partners') bulk data operations, but options to introduce a form of statutory oversight are likely to be considered as part of legislative reform over the next 18 months. As an interim arrangement the Intelligence Services Commissioner has been asked to review (on a non-statutory basis) the three agencies' arrangements for acquiring, handling and using this type of data. This will include at least one annual scrutiny session.

#### **DATA SECURITY AND MEDIA STORAGE**

24. The database is accredited to TOP SECRET STRAP 2 UK EYES ONLY.

25. [redacted]

26. [redacted]

27. SIS has a duty to ensure the security of all data, whatever and wherever its origins. The officer(s) collecting or acquiring the data is responsible for ensuring that the relevant security team guidance is followed.

