Strategic Criminal Intelligence Education: A Collaborative Approach

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I. Introduction

Education within criminal justice occurs across a broad range of subject areas and student capabilities. Within law enforcement in many countries there has been an emphasis on education and learning at the lower organizational levels, with fewer opportunities after an incumbent has been in a position for some time. The discipline of criminal intelligence analysis is precisely such an area. Intelligence analysts usually begin their intelligence careers as tactical analysts, focusing on case by case analysis. At this level there is often a skills-based training regime where the focal point of any education or training opportunities is the acquisition of analytical skills in regard to computer packages and crime databases. An intelligence analyst may then progress to operational intelligence duties, where the focus is on resource allocation and monitoring of local crime patterns. The strategic level of criminal intelligence is an area that employs the least number of analysts. By the time an analyst commences employment at the strategic level, most have previous experience at the tactical and operational level. There is a general misconception that the skills necessary for the job have already been acquired in the operational and tactical arena. However ability with the analytical techniques that are applicable at the tactical and operational stage does not necessarily prepare an analyst for the more eclectic and often nebulous field of strategic criminal intelligence.

This paper looks at the development of education in strategic criminal intelligence across Australia, the distinctive challenges of education and training in this area, and provides an overview of the National Strategic Intelligence Course (NSIC); a unique university-integrated education program for senior intelligence analysts in Australia. The aim of the overview is to show how a collaborative approach between different agencies can create a successful course that is adopted and recognized by all law enforcement agencies in a country.

II. Strategic intelligence in Australia

The globalization of the new world order, the rapidity of communications through the Internet, and the increased movement of illicit commodities around the world has created new challenges for law enforcement in many countries. Criminal intelligence, although a relatively recent introduction to the law enforcement arsenal compared to military intelligence (Morehouse, 2000), is becoming the focus of strategic decision-making within policing and law enforcement. The increased interest in intelligence as a mechanism for strategy within law enforcement is particularly strong in the UK where there has been a considerable degree of attention to intelligence-led policing (Maguire, 2000; Morgan & Newburn, 1997; Ratcliffe, 2002; Smith, 1997; Woodhouse, 1997). This interest has also led to intelligence-led operations in Australia (Australian Federal Police, 2001; Ratcliffe, 2001). However, in Australia, a country with a federal model of government, the adoption of intelligence-led strategies does have some difficulties. Federal agencies have responsibility for a few specific areas of law enforcement, while states retain a considerable degree of power in most areas (Fleming & Lafferty, 2000).

National and state coordination of law enforcement activity and criminal justice policy is therefore complicated by the organizational structure and jurisdictional constraints of the various bodies. There are six state police services, one territory police force, and the Australian Federal Police which also provides the local policing for the Australian Capital Territory. Along with these eight police agencies, there are also a myriad of local, state, and federal agencies that have a law enforcement function. For example, state bodies include the Police Integrity Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales, and the Crime and Misconduct Commission in Queensland. Federal authorities include the Australian Crime Commission[i], the Australian Customs Service, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, all of which have investigative and law enforcement roles. The lack of strategic intelligence coordination across the country was recognized back in 1981 when, following the recommendation of a number of Royal Commissions, the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) was formed in Canberra. It was soon recognized that strategic intelligence education and training was lacking, and the ABCI was tasked with the creation of a strategic intelligence training program (Rogers, 2004).

Strategic intelligence presents a considerable departure from traditional intelligence analytical thinking. It is inherently forward-looking, focusing on the likely criminal environment at some point in the future, maybe years ahead. It deals with interpretation of an often hazy present to generate a possible scenario, or range of scenarios, for an unclear future. This can cause problems for traditional intelligence analysts trained, as they often are, in the more immediate and concrete world of tactical and operational law enforcement activities. Questions like how many burglaries were there last week or where is the worst vehicle theft hotspot have more appeal to most analysts than what is the likely trend for heroin importation over the next two years.

Within law enforcement, intelligence has a multitude of different definitions and often has a different definition in every agency. Some agency definitions of intelligence can stretch to four or five pages, while others are single sentences (Palmer & McGillicuddy, 1991). As a general definition, readers may like to consider the following fairly simple definition for the purposes of this paper: intelligence aims to provide insight or understanding, and hence make a contribution to decision-making at all levels of an organization in line with organizational objectives. The important parts of this definition are the necessity to provide insight and understanding, and to make a contribution to decision-making. These two aspects are most difficult at the strategic level. Different levels of intelligence have as many definitions as there are agencies; however the following from the Australian Customs Service (ACS) is a useful one in that the definition is not agency specific, but does cover the salient points. Strategic intelligence produces "an intelligence product that provides insight or understanding, contributing to decisions on broad strategies, policies and resources, directed to achieving long-term organizational objectives", while operational intelligence generates an intelligence product which "supports national and regional managers of line areas in planning activity and deploying resources to achieve operational objectives". Finally tactical intelligence produces a product which 'supports line areas and other operational areas in taking case-specific action to achieve compliance or enforcement objectives" (ACS 2000, pp. 5-6).

The original Strategic Intelligence Course dated back to a one-week residential course conducted at the Australian Police Staff College at Manly on the North shore of Sydney in the early 1990's. This early brainchild of a group of analysts at the National Crime Authority grew to include the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence. In 1998 the membership of the course

was expanded by John Ure, then Director of the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, to include the Office of Strategic Crime Assessments and the Australian Federal Police. John Ure also brought in Charles Sturt University and moved the course to the Australian capital (K. Rogers & J. Ure, personal communication). Since 1999 and the move to Canberra the course has had a considerable overhaul. It is now a two week course, fully integrated into a Graduate Certificate Program in Criminal Intelligence with a university partner, and includes pre and post residential coursework.

III. The current National Strategic Intelligence Course

The National Strategic Intelligence Course (NSIC) aims to provide participants with a working knowledge of strategic intelligence, advanced analytical tools, research methods, and project management. This is done through the framework of the traditional intelligence process, namely the conversion of raw information into a value-added decision-making product through a process of information collection, collation, analysis and dissemination (Peterson, Morehouse, & Wright, 2000). The current course is a combination of educational components surrounding a two-week residential course in the Australian capital, Canberra. At the time of writing, the course is sponsored by two federal law enforcement agencies and one University. These partners participate in the Course Consultative Committee (CCC), which acts as the board of management for the course. The two law enforcement agencies are the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP), while the University contribution is coordinated by the Centre for Investigative Studies and Crime Reduction and the School of Policing Studies of Charles Sturt University (CSU). As indicated earlier, the ABCI, NCA and OSCA was combined into the Australian Crime Commission, and under a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in May 2004, the ACC has taken on the industry coordination role previously performed by the former ABCI.[1] The industry coordinator manages the selection process of participants by sending out letters of invitation for law enforcement agencies to nominate intelligence analysts to

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[1] The 2004 NSIC Memorandum of Understanding governs the roles and responsibilities of the three agencies (the AFP, ACC and the University) currently delivering the NSIC. A new MOU was required as the original agreement between the ABCI and the University signed in 2000 had expired. In addition, a new MOU was legally required to acknowledge that the ACC was to take the role of the former ABCI on the course and to formally recognize the Australian Federal Police becoming a third NSIC partner.

attend the course. Coordination of all matters academic is handled by the course coordinator appointed by the University.

The CCC members meet after the conclusion of the residential component of each course to discuss student feedback, review learning objectives and curriculum, and if necessary adjudicate on any matters pertaining to course development. Under the new MOU, CCC members will also instigate a formal review of the course objectives and outcomes two years from the date of all parties signing it. This is an important extra proactive function given to the CCC because the NSIC is the one recognized strategic intelligence course for law enforcement in Australia. Federal and state law enforcement agencies that fund their staff to attend the course are stakeholders interested in monitoring that the course provides value for money and continue to meet their own corporate intelligence training objectives. Successful completion of the course provides credit to University programs and, *unusually*, the course is recognized by all the law enforcement agencies in Australia. Competition for the available places on the course is often high, though dependent on operational matters. Recruitment of students was poor during the 2000 Sydney Olympics, but rose rapidly afterwards bringing students to the course with recent strategic and operational experience at an international event. As indicated earlier, months before the course, the industry coordinator writes to commissioners of police and heads of intelligence across Australia, inviting applications for the course. Usual requirements are that a nominated individual: must be in an intelligence position within a recognized law enforcement agency; have served in an intelligence capacity for the previous two years; and or have successfully completed intelligence officer training or a research orientate undergraduate qualification. Applications are sorted and students selected by a subcommittee of the CCC using a basic formula.

Each course has 20 places, with two places each going to most of the agencies on the CCC. The University does not usually demand a place. Four places are given to an innovative program of the Australian Federal Police, called the Law Enforcement Cooperation Program (LECP). The LECP's aim is to increase collaboration with law enforcement agencies overseas. It funds places for intelligence analysts from a wide variety of countries, including Thailand, Lebanon, Singapore, the US, Fiji, and Iran. Once the LECP and the CCC members have taken their allocated places, one place is allocated to each of the state law enforcement agencies. With seven of these it can be seen that places on the course fill up quickly, especially given that there are only three or four courses a year. The remaining places are allocated based on a rotation of

agency places, combined with comparison of the qualities of the individual course candidate. In some instances, a state law enforcement agency will not sponsor a student to attend. In these circumstances, the CCC will invite other law enforcement or regulatory agencies to participate which are not normally invited. For example on the February 2004 course, a senior intelligence officer from the NSW Department of Corrective Services was invited to attend.

The LECP has sponsored dozens of overseas students, from a variety of countries. Nomination of the students is by the AFP Liaison Officer in the chosen country. Final selection is made in Canberra. Most of the students are selected from the area of drug interdiction as the LECP is funded through an anti-drug budget. A current priority for the LECP is assisting small South Pacific states to build stronger law enforcement capabilities. In a number of states such as Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa, the AFP, via its LECP liaison network, is assisting local law enforcement capabilities to develop more effective management of trans-national crime which may have an impact on Australia. For example, the LECP has funded the establishment of Trans-national Crime Teams (TNCT) in the above South Pacific countries and will do so in Papua New Guinea in the near future (AFP 2003, 63). Given the South Pacific regions' priority to Australian law enforcement, it is likely that the LECP will continue to select students from this region to attend the course for the foreseeable future.

Overseas students add a different perspective on strategic intelligence and law enforcement policy and they make an important contribution to the course. In addition, because the Graduate programs run by Charles Sturt University are distance programs, the overseas students can benefit from the course articulation into the Graduate Certificate in Criminal Intelligence.

IV. Course Aims and Objectives

The aim of the NSIC is that after successful completion of the NSIC, students will be able to:

- produce high quality strategic intelligence products;
- appreciate the need for communication, consultation and negotiation in developing a client focused strategic intelligence product;
- demonstrate knowledge of intelligence and information gathering and data analysis techniques;
- demonstrate sound knowledge of and skill in applying contemporary project management methodologies within the discipline of strategic criminal intelligence;

- analyze a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for application within the criminal intelligence environment;

- analyze inter-agency/jurisdictional requirements and functions;

- utilize risk management and cost-benefit analysis strategies within the strategic intelligence tasking;

- communicate complex issues and ideas clearly and effectively;

- market strategic intelligence products.

V. Course Outline and Delivery

Intelligence is a cyclic process of analysis, dissemination and feedback (Standing Committee on Organized Crime & Criminal Intelligence, 1997), and the course structure broadly follows this process. The residential component of the course is split into five modules, each of which relates to the intelligence cycle. This relationship is shown in Table 1. In Table 1, the NSIC modules are numbered in the general order of delivery of the course. The intelligence cycle components are not numbered, as the intelligence cycle is intended to be a cycle of continual activity. As each task is completed and reviewed, the findings of the review form the direction for a new task, and so on.

Table 1

Shows the relationship between the intelligence cycle and NSIC modules. The numbers indicate the delivery order of the NSIC modules

Intelligence cycle	NSIC module and broad topics covered
Direction	2. Task definition, project management, communication skills
Collection	3. Risk and threat, collection theory and research methodology
Analysis	4. Analysis, including futures and indicator and early warning tools
Dissemination	5. Intelligence dissemination products and evaluating intelligence

Note: Module 1, Introduction to Strategic Intelligence, does not conform to the intelligence cycle and has not been included in the table. It is a "scene setter" for the rest

of the course and consists of two lectures which overview course objectives and discuss the role of strategic intelligence in the broader policy making process.

Each NSIC session/lecture within a module becomes the responsibility of one of the three CCC partners: AFP, ACC or CSU. Generally the CSU representative, who is the course coordinator, has overall responsibility for ensuring that each partner takes their share of lectures on the course. However, decisions on selecting specific lecturers are made collaboratively with the ACC and the AFP. The ACC and AFP will nominate a directing staff member to assist the Course Coordinator in delivering the course. Directing staff will lecture on areas where they have expertise and are also responsible for the recruitment of course lecturers and speakers from their agencies as required. They also assist with assessment tasks. The course coordinator is responsible for ensuring that there is continuity in the use of definitions and intelligence structures, and that there is minimum overlap with module content. The intelligence definitions currently employed are the ACS definitions mentioned earlier. The course coordinator is also responsible for overall course quality control; maintaining the academic standards in the assessed items, the assessment structure and in the academic level of the whole process.

In the past, lectures and practical sessions have been arranged around a course theme. Examples have included: drug importation, electronic crime, and the implications for criminal activity of increased border protection. However, more recently, the thematic approach has been superseded by a more general approach where syndicate groups of five students apply their newly acquired theoretical and practical skills to a specific area or topic of interest to Australian law enforcement. Usually the course coordinator seeks advice from the Industry Coordinator and directing staff in selecting topics that are of current strategic relevance to law enforcement. Topics selected must also be suitable for the application of a number of strategic analytical tools used in the course so students can assess how a criminal threat issue will become significant over the next three to five years.

VI. Assessment

The nature of the strategic intelligence environment in Australia is one of collaboration, and this is a component that is stressed on the course. Participants complete a pre-course assessed assignment that is designed to examine the general nature of strategic intelligence. This activity is supported with essay-writing guides and pre-course readings. The assignment helps to establish a common base for the students by requiring an understanding of the pre-course

readings. In turn, the assignment assists the directing staff in establishing a baseline for knowledge about strategic intelligence as students come from different jurisdictions and have varying levels of background in this area.

The residential component of the course includes a strong teamwork element. As mentioned earlier, participants are teamed into four syndicates of five members, and the syndicates work toward a final presentation on the penultimate day of the residential phase. There are a number of presentations and coursework submissions required from syndicates during the course, and these all contribute to the score of an individual syndicate member. The focus of the two weeks is the final presentation, supported by a written document. The presentation is in the form of an intelligence briefing, and the supporting document is designated as an "NSIC scoping paper". This is a hybrid between a formal intelligence assessment, which is not possible to complete within the residential course time frame, and a briefing paper. The syndicate mark contributes a significant amount to the score of each participant, encouraging solid teamwork and cooperation to achieve the syndicate aims. A final, though small, assessed component is a measure of course participation determined by a meeting of the course directing staff made up of one representative from each of the partner organizations. Student work and presentations are assessed by the directing staff, and the pre-course assignment is assessed by the course coordinator.

Each group's syndicate question and other items assessed earlier are combined to provide the basis for the final presentation and NSIC scoping paper. For example, in one earlier assessment task, syndicates are asked to prepare an outline intelligence assessment that is refined and worked on throughout the course. The task definition lecture is taught and then the students put the material to practical benefit by refining the task their syndicate has been assigned. They then use this refined task as the basis for determining a research methodology. This research methodology becomes the basis for the analytical phase which is prepared for dissemination. The whole process is managed with tools and techniques covered in the fourth module. In this way, the task assigned to each syndicate at the commencement of the residential component is followed throughout the course.

As mentioned earlier, syndicate tasks are drawn from the real-life experience of the directing staff. Initial tasks, prior to refinement, can have an all-too-true feel to them. They are initially designed to be impossible to complete within the time frame, and often within any time

frame! For example, one syndicate might be asked to prepare an evaluation of the link between illegal immigration and crime for a fictitious client. Another group might be allocated a fictitious client who is a government minister who has returned from a conference where her South African peer has claimed that Australia is the centre of electronic fraud in the southern hemisphere and the minister wants to check the veracity of the South African claim. Meanwhile, a third group might have to project the patterns of people-smuggling for the next five years. These broad-ranging tasks are refined during the task definition stage of the course.

On successful completion of the residential component of the NSIC, participants are awarded a simple certificate of attendance. A certificate of attainment is achieved through the completion of a post-course practicum (PCP). The aim of the PCP is for students to demonstrate that they can reproduce the standards of analytical product and dissemination technique back in the workplace of their host agency. Workplace assessors are often past course participants. The participants' supervisors are sent a workplace assessor pack that inform them of the course aims and student expectations. They assess a piece of work submitted by the student and submit their assessment to both the students and the course coordinator. The PCP is assessed in the workplace by a supervisor of the course participant predominantly for security purposes. Strategic intelligence assessments in Commonwealth agencies usually carry a significant security classification and often have distribution lists that are in-house only. They are therefore unavailable to the course coordinator, and occasionally are not for dissemination to other members of the directing staff. Assessment within the workplace is therefore the best option.

VII. Learning Environment

Given all that the course attempts to achieve in two weeks, the choice of a conducive learning environment is essential. The course is currently sited at the AFP training college in Canberra. Barton College provides residential accommodation, fully equipped classrooms with PowerPoint facilities, a large library with permanent, experienced library staff, computer facilities with Intranet, and access to the Internet. In addition to the library resources, the students are provided with a copy of the adopted course text, "*Strategic Thinking in Criminal Intelligence*" (Ratcliffe, 2004). The college also has access to the Australian Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (ALEIN) for students with the appropriate security classification. Directing staff have access to computing, printing and copying facilities. Course welcome and opening remarks and the final presentation are held in a small theater which has seating for approximately

150 with full presentation support for PowerPoint and video. As the college is a secure location, the facilities are available 24 hours a day, which is particularly useful as the day of the final presentation approaches. The days are fully spent in the classroom and syndicate work is usually completed in the evenings. For some groups working into the early hours of the morning is common, though not encouraged!

The location of the college in the heart of the Federal government is also helpful. External speakers are often invited from federal agencies, and it is useful that their headquarters are sited within the city. This enables the course to attract higher level speakers from intelligence agencies who would otherwise not be able to afford the time to travel further a field.
Students from North America are often surprised at the level of interaction between the directing staff, the lecturers and the students. One of the strong points with the course is that previous experience in the intelligence business is a prerequisite. While the participants may not have previous experience at the strategic level, they often have a considerable wealth of knowledge in the operational arena. This expertise is relevant in discussion of analytical techniques, and the dissemination of operational material on the strategic plane. The formal instruction sessions can have a flexible end time to allow for discussion.

VIII. Student Feedback

Student feedback has been a vital aspect of the development of the NSIC. Feedback is gathered from every student on every course. The students are polled for their view on the quality and relevance of every significant presentation, and on the administration and support throughout the course. As well as gathering this qualitative and quantitative information through brief paper surveys, the students spend some time on the last day of the course with a senior member of either the university, often the Head of the School of Policing Studies, or a senior member of the ACC. During this time the university or ACC member will go through the course from start to finish and gather final student's views in a group forum.

The student views on presenter quality and relevance are given to the presenters to enable them to revise their future presentations. The course coordinator and the agency representatives also uses this feedback to determine the suitability of a presenter for future courses. Presenters who receive two poor feedback results are not usually invited to present for the course again. This helps to maintain the high standard of teaching on the NSIC. This may seem a little harsh, especially given that some researchers have argued that required courses and subjects can have a

tendency to attract lower evaluations (Neath, 1996), however the strategic intelligence field is quite a small one in Australia, and the course directing staff have to be seen to be responsive to student evaluations.

All aspects of formative feedback gathered during the course are available to the CCC at their regular meetings. Adoption of the feedback from the students on the structure of the course is tempered with the wishes of the senior members of the intelligence agencies represented on the CCC. For example, students sometimes feel that an overview of strategic intelligence that is presented by a senior member of a federal law enforcement agency covers ground with which they are familiar. However the CCC maintains that this is an important aspect. It brings the students up to the same level, allows the CCC to establish its collaborative vision of strategic intelligence, and shows students where this may differ from the views of their agencies. As has been uncovered in more traditional criminal justice education, students can be swayed in their evaluations by factors unrelated to the material presented (Lersch & Greek, 2001), and it has been suggested that students are not necessarily well placed to assess some areas of courses due to their inexperience with the subject matter (Schmelkin, Spencer & Gellman, 1997). The directing staff often receive anecdotal feedback from students that parts of the course only become relevant once they have been back in their own agencies for a number of months.

IX. Working in the Collaborative Framework

The collaborative arrangement has advantages for all concerned. The federal law enforcement agencies are able to say that they are participating in tertiary education and are maintaining a high level of education for their staff, while the University is able to say that they are maintaining the currency of its courses through strong involvement with practitioner organizations and by working with organizations at the 'coal face' of criminal intelligence. The students benefit by having their employer pay for half of a graduate certificate, which leads into a graduate diploma and on towards a Masters in Criminal Intelligence. This is a strong draw card for the course, in that few educational opportunities within policing in Australia offer an explicit connection to formalized graduate level education.

There are, of course, also some drawbacks. A number of meetings are necessary as sometimes the wishes of the University in regard to academic level are not always compatible with the desires of the agencies. However, it is equally common for the University to act as a mediator between the competing views of the law enforcement agencies in regard to the

curriculum and the 'ownership' of the course. Although these occasional difficulties add to the administrative load of the course, the end result far outweighs any problems encountered on the way.

X. The NSIC within a Post-graduate Framework

Australian law enforcement has for many years been working more closely with the university sector in the provision of law enforcement education. For example, Charles Sturt University has been involved in the recognition of constable level education for the New South Wales Police Service since 1993 (Wood, 1997). With regard to the NSIC, the university provides a check on academic standards throughout the course, and provides an opportunity for further study after the course. Successful completion of the post-course practicum entitles the students to both a certificate of attainment as well as 50 percent subject credit toward Graduate Certificate in Criminal Intelligence with the university. The articulation of the course into the graduate certificate program provides a further education opportunity for students after the course, where their employer has essentially funded the first half of the Graduate Certificate. This is a considerable incentive for many students, and gives the university some return for their investment in the NSIC. Credit for two subjects within the graduate certificate provides an external recognition of professional ability that is becoming more sought-after within law enforcement. At the time of writing, this is the only post-graduate academic qualification in criminal intelligence available in Australia.

Recent developments in the structure of intelligence organizations within Australia are likely to produce some minor administrative changes to the course, but the basic structure is likely to remain. Indeed, a comprehensive review of NSIC from 2000 to the present, which was commissioned by the CCC along with drafting the new MOU, has highlighted that the overall structure of the course continues to meet law enforcement and student's requirements.

NSIC, after a decade in existence, has engendered a strong reputation both within Australia, and overseas. Places are highly sought-after and many students wait up to a year or more to get a place. The merger of the ABCI, OSCA and the NCA into the Australian Crime Commission has reduced the number of partners within the NSIC, and these changes mean that the current partnership includes Charles Sturt University as the university partner, the Australian Federal Police, and the Australian Crime Commission. These two agencies represent the law

enforcement bodies with the greatest number of intelligence analysts, and form a strong body with an interest in maintaining the NSIC.

In conclusion, the NSIC forms the start to what may become a new type of law enforcement education course. With the growth of Information Technology (IT) and the professionalization of policing there has been an emphasis on training and not education. Most intelligence analysts receive training in analytical computer packages, such as the use of mapping systems, with little regard to the more intellectual components of intelligence analysis. The NSIC provides an opportunity to learn and develop strategies for promoting the use of intelligence at the policy and strategic decision-making level, and to appreciate the subtleties of making recommendations regarding an often unclear future. It also provides students with a qualification that is recognized by all of the law enforcement agencies in the country both at the federal and state level.

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