**Proposal for a Nordic Interagency Intelligence conference and centre**

**Introduction**

At the conclusion of the recent one-day conference on Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) hosted by the Royal Danish Defence College, a Danish military officer stood up and suggested that the time had come for a Nordic interagency working group on OSINT. I completely agree. The practices of all others are so narrowly focused on military threats and the Internet as the sole source of information that they deprive the Nordic countries of the best available intelligence (decision-support) that can also be fully considered by the public.

I propose that regardless of what the Danish might do on their own, the Norwegian Defence University College could usefully consider bringing together no more than 120 people – including members of the Nordic Council staff, and counterpart action officers from the other four Nordic defence colleges – to discuss whether the time has come for an autonomous Nordic interagency intelligence centre and network, one that relies primarily on OSINT but with ample space for secret counterintelligence and precision secret intelligence collection – the key is to no longer rely on external sources of intelligence that are exclusively secret, focused obsessively on the Russians, and not at all useful in stopping illegal immigrants.

We are over 25 years late in relation to intelligence that provides budget justifications for peaceful preventive measures. It was in 1989 that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, then General Al Gray, USMC, called for greater attention to emerging non-state actor threats, and the use of intelligence to guide investments toward “peaceful preventive measures.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Better Nordic intelligence will also be helpful to avoiding complicity in elective wars whose justifications are mis-stated and whose outcomes include illegal immigrants flooding north.

The event is consistent with and could be a vital contributor to the emerging concept of D3 (Defence, Diplomacy, Development) Innovation being championed by US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter. It could also gain Nordic access to $2 billion a year if the proposed Open Source (Technologies) Agency can be discussed at the Ministerial level.[[2]](#endnote-2) All of this is highly relevant to the capability gaps of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) as well as the United Nations (UN).

A distilled executive video summary of the event is planned for sharing with the President of the UN General Assembly and the Secretary-General of NATO as well as the leadership and staff of the Nordic Council and perhaps the EU. A free online book, the *Nordic Interagency Open Source Intelligence Handbook*, could be a tangible product of this event and is badly needed since all the existing handbooks are out-of-date or skewed toward the shallow web. [[3]](#endnote-3)

It is an inherent budget assumption for the event, that meeting space at the Norwegian Defence University College will be free of charge. A minimalist budget is possible because the event would only fund a single project leader, the only person whose modest expenses must be covered, and the cost of producing a distilled executive video and a free online reference book. Other speakers as well as participants would be official, by invitation, their expenses covered by their parent organizations.

Done soon – in June or July – the event could inspire a commensurate resolution or action on the part of NATO and the UN General Assembly – the Danish President’s term ends in September, hence my view that a conference and consensus should be sought in the summer rather than in the fall.

**What Is the Point Part I?**

OSINT done right not only makes us more effective at waging war but also more effective at waging peace. Sadly, with the exception of the program I supported at USSOCOM,[[4]](#endnote-4) we have done it wrong all these years. Here is what Brigadier-General Jim Cox, Canadian Army (Retired), the serving NATO Deputy J-2 that hired me in 2000, had to say in 2013:[[5]](#endnote-5)

*The process, to my mind, simply stopped at “OSINFO” and never got to “OSINT.”*

*Even today, I think this is still a problem in most ‘modern’ intelligence staffs. People think that simply collecting open source info – although now from a wider range of sources – is OSINT, when I say it is not. It’s like collecting satellite pictures and calling them IMINT … the job isn’t done until they are analyzed and an assessment made.*

*If I was king of the world, I would build an OSINT organization to rival existing national SIGINT organizations (CSEC in Canada, NSA in US) and HUMINT organizations (CSIS in Canada, CIA in US). This OSINT organization would be in a number of big buildings around the country, tapped into all the sources you have long written about (media, experts, academia … all tribes) AND they would produce magnificent ‘single source’ OSINT products that could be added to SIGINT, HUMINT, IMINT etc. products at the national level.*

*Given the power and range of today’s global communications, I suspect OSINT products would be more complete and powerful than any other single source product.*

General Cox is correct – in my view OSINT has been “hijacked” by the US military-industrial complex, and turned into a very expensive social media Internet surfing exercise that can done by people from air-conditioned cubicles with no grasp of ground truth and no mandate to talk to real people with deep indigenous knowledge.

OSINT done right is Human Intelligence (HUMINT).[[6]](#endnote-6) Instead of investments in contractors and Internet monitoring technology (with most “collection” never actually processed), it requires something the Nordics used to be good at – language-qualified officers traveling across the provincial areas everywhere in the world – acquiring “eyes-on, ears-on, mind-open” information legally and ethically. It also requires very modest funding – roughly 5% of the total intelligence budget instead of the half of one percent customary today – for out-sourcing in small amounts to specific individuals across all nationalities, favoring indigenous personnel with deep local knowledge.

Embracing what General Cox, former Deputy J-2 of NATO wrote in 2013, I believe we need multiple multinational OSINT centers – certainly one for the Nordics, but ideally also matching centers for NATO, the EU, other regional blocs such as the African Union (AU) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and or course the United Nations (UN). Together, these will ultimately comprise the foundation for a World Brain useful to everyone. On that foundation, secret sources and methods will be more focused, less expensive, and more valuable.

The time has come to strike a better balance between OSINT and secret sources and methods, and to end Nordic reliance on external parties for the vast majority of their secret information.

**What is the Point Part II?**

Since World War II (WWII) the Soviet Union – today Russia – has been the primary “threat” in the eyes of the US, NATO, and the Nordic countries, and the military has been the primary focal point for national “defense.” Today many are realizing that we have lacked balance in our interagency and multinational deliberations. For the Singapore military the wake-up call was the pandemic threat of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 – they realized they needed to re-think and re-structure so as to defend Singapore against all threats, not just those wearing a uniform and carrying a weapon. For the Nordics I hope that the illegal immigrant threat is the wake-up call. Two million illegal immigrants in the south are going to turn into twenty million illegal immigrants in the north within five to ten years unless there is a radical change in how we do multinational D3. Diplomacy and development – especially development – are the key to keeping all these illegal immigrants in their home countries, at peace, in prosperity.

A rolling Nordic Interagency Intelligence conference, with a constant Nordic Council cadre of ten but the other 110 in each conference from within the country organizing the non-profit (no fee) event, would rapidly create a multinational, multiagency, multidisciplinary, multidomain information-sharing and sense-making (M4IS2) community of interest. This could lead to the establishment of a Nordic Interagency Intelligence Centre that is modestly funded to do the 80% of open intelligence (decision-support) needed to stop excessive investment in American heavy metal military products that are neither needed nor effective (the J-35 aircraft stands out as an example), while demonstrating that the Return on Investment (ROI) for ceasing to support dictators, for boycotting those that commit genocide, and for supporting the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), are all in the best interests of the Nordic nations.

For the first time in history, a Nordic Interagency intelligence capability could assure equal levels of decision-support to each of the critical agencies responsible for both foreign and domestic investments and policies; and also assure balanced attention to the creation of a Nordic grand strategy[[7]](#endnote-7) and a Nordic exemplar to NATO, the EU, and the UN, such that we stop engaging in elective wars based on lies; we stop allowing predatory capitalism including the bankrupting of entire countries; and we stop tolerating the willful destruction of countries such as Libya by France, simply because they can, never mind the true cost in illegal refugees.

**What is the Point Part III**

While exciting and worthwhile on its own merits – radically improving Nordic access to all relevant information and Nordic inter-agency decision-making at the strategic, policy, acquisition, and operational levels – this initiative opens the door to a much greater good: the creation of multiple Nordic Smart Nations[[8]](#endnote-8) that eradicate the 50% waste inherent in current Western approaches to each domain from agriculture to energy to health to housing to security to water and beyond (thus assuring sustainable quality of life for future generations of Nordics) – AND the creation of an OSEE innovation approach to stabilizing and reconstructing Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East and all other zones of conflict that are sending illegal immigrants north (or in the case of Indonesia, south).[[9]](#endnote-9)

The Finns, and Helsinki in particular, appear to be properly merging government, corporate, and academic networks toward the creation of a Smart Nation and the embrace of good ideas from everywhere (India is trying something similar), but they have not made the leap toward OSEE as a foundation for the future both at home and abroad.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**Can Norway Take the Lead?**

Time is the one strategic variable that cannot be bought nor replaced. I realize summer is coming, but so are millions more illegal immigrants. If we are to come together with good heart and good sense to stabilize the world, we must act sooner than later. Now – if the Nordics are finally sufficiently concerned about the unconventional non-state threats I have warned against for 25 years – is the time to both listen and act. [[11]](#endnote-11)

Very respectfully,

Robert David Steele

<http://robertdavidsteele.com>

1. Gray, Al (Ghost-Written by Robert Steele), “[Global Intelligence Challenges in the 1990’s](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1989/07/general-al-gray-on-global-intelligence-challenges-1989/),” *American Intelligence Journal*, Winter 1989-1990, pp. 37-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Steele, Robert. “Memorandum for the Vice President, “[SUBJECT: Supporting the President’s Interest in 2015 Defense, Diplomacy, and Development Innovation – the Open Source (Technologies) Agency, Digital Deserts, & Global Stabilization](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2015/10/usa-open-source-technologies-agency/),” Oakton, VA: Earth Intelligence Network, October 8, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Steele, Robert. “[Special Operations Forces Open Source Intelligence](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2009/07/2004-special-operations-forces-osint-handbook-strawman/),” Fort Bragg, NC: 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, 2004; Steele, Robert with Andrew Chester (15%), [*NATO Open Source Intelligence Handbook*](http://www.phibetaiota.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/NATO-OSINT-Handbook1.pdf), Norfolk, VA: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, November 2001; and Steele, Robert (ed), [*Open Source Intelligence: Professional Handbook*](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1996/10/handbook-open-source-intelligence-professional-handbook-joint-military-intelligence-training-center-defense-intelligence-agency-october-1996/), Bolling AFB, DC: Joint Military Intelligence Training Center, October 1996. Many other handbooks exist – none is sufficient to our needs today. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Under the leadership of Mr. Ben Harrison, today a senior officer at USSOCOM, the SOCOM J-23 was answering 40% of all SOCOM Essential Elements of Information (EEI) submitted to the US all-source requirements management system, COLISEUM, at a cost of $5 million a year with 22 people on staff. That unit has since been destroyed. The secret world remains unable to answer most of the remaining requirements – General Tony Zinni, USMC (Retired), then Commander-in-Chief of the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) is on record as stating that [he never received more than 4% of his command knowledge from secret sources and methods](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2010/12/graphic-tony-zinni-on-4-at-best/). My own calculations are that OSINT “done right” can answer 80% of most strategic, policy, acquisition, and operational requirements for information and intelligence (intelligence is decision-support answering a very specific question from a specific person or group); my specific estimates in relation to the ten high-level threats to humanity identified by the UN High-Level Threat Panel in 2004 are here: Steele, Robert. “[Open Source Intelligence (Strategic)](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2012/12/open-source-intelligence-strategic-utilidad-osint-estrategico/),” in Loch Johnson (ed.), [*Strategic Intelligence: The Intelligence Cycle*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0275989445/ossnet-20), Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007, Chapter 6, pp. 96-122. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. His comment is published by permission at <http://tinyurl.com/2016-OSINT>, where my lecture in Denmark can also be found in printed and video form. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *Cf.* Steele, Robert (2010). [Human Intelligence: All Humans, All Minds, All the Time](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=991), Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Press, June 3, 2010 as well as Steele, Robert (2006). [Information Operations: Putting the “I” Back Into DIME](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=642), Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Press, February 1, 2006 and Steele, Robert (2002). [The New Craft of Intelligence: Achieving Asymmetric Advantage in the Face of Nontraditional Threats](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=217), Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Press, February 1, 2002. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The US and NATO do not have a grand strategy, nor do most nation-states. I offer some perspective at Steele, Robert. [*An American Grand Strategy: Evidence-Based, Affordable, Balanced, Flexible*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B017GCM8DG/ossnet-20), Amazon Kindle, October 31, 2015. 64 pages. 99 cents; it is also free online at [Robert Steele: An American Grand Strategy](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2015/10/robert-steele-a-notional-grand-strategy-request-for-comments/), *Phi Beta Iota Public Intelligence* Blog, October 31, 2015.. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. My tour of the world in 1994 produced only one interested government, but Singapore then lost its way to American information technology companies selling legacy systems that do not work as they should in part because they are incapable of ingesting all data or processing all data, and the bad idea that it should try to predict the future instead of shape it. In the aftermath of that failed tour I wrote these two pieces: Steele, Robert. “[SPECIAL FEATURE: Creating a Smart Nation–Strategy, Policy, Intelligence, and Information,](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1995/07/1995-giq-132-creating-a-smart-nation-strategy-policy-intelligence-and-information/)”  *Government Information Quarterly*, pp. 159-173 and Steele, Robert. “[Information Peacekeeping: Innovative Policy Options](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1996/12/1996-steele-us-information-peacekeeping-innovative-policy-options/),” *Proceedings*, Fifth International Symposium on Global Security & Global Competitiveness: Open Source Solutions,” Vol II, pp. 255-267. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. More details are at Steele, Robert. “[Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE) — a Nordic Manifesto](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2016/04/open-source-everything-engineering-osee-the-ieee-manifesto-in-early-draft/),” *Phi Beta Iota Public Intelligence Blog*, April 15, 2016. I am particularly interested in creating, teaching, and earning the first meta-PhD, one I have designed, that integrates three tracks: holistic analytics, true cost economics, and OSEE. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Steele, Robert. “[Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE) – Creating the Academy, Economy, Government, and Society of the Future](http://www.phibetaiota.net/2016/04/2016-robert-steele-open-source-everything-engineering-osee-creating-the-academy-economy-government-and-society-of-the-future/),” *Phi Beta Iota Public Intelligence Blog*, April 5, 2016. The balance of my current thinking, including my recent work for Denmark and toward UN accomplishment of the SDG goals with OSEE, is easily found at one location, <http://tinyurl.com/Steele-Future>. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. *Supra* Note 1 and see also Steele, Robert. “[Intelligence in the 1990’s: Recasting National Security in a Changing World](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1990/07/1990-steele-in-intelligence-in-the-1990s/),” *American Intelligence Journal*, Summer/Fall 1990, pp. 29-36; Steele, Robert. “[Applying the ‘New Paradigm’: How to Avoid Strategic Intelligence Failures in the Future](http://www.phibetaiota.net/1991/09/4015/),” *American Intelligence Journal*, Autumn 1991, pp. 43-46, and Steele, Robert. [*The New Craft of Intelligence: Personal, Public, & Political–Citizen’s Action Handbook for Fighting Terrorism, Genocide, Disease, Toxic Bombs, & Corruption*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0971566119/ossnet-20), Open Source Solutions, Inc., April 8, 2002. All other works over a quarter century are easily found at <http://robertdavidsteele.com>. I finally understood the corruption of the US military-industrial complex in 2008, after I asked both USSOCOM and the US Navy Irregular Warfare people why they had not acted on my official warning in 2005 from within USCENTCOM J2P, of the need to address the Somali pirates with a few roving hunter-killer teams using small yachts as bait. One thousand miles apart, two commands said virtually the same thing: “It wasn’t an expensive enough problem.” The reality is that the “complex” thinks only of dollars for contractors and banks, it does not think about the “true cost” of destabilizing the world and flooding Europe with illegal immigrants. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)