

2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



NATIONAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE
and SECURITY CENTER

Office of the Director of National Intelligence



Welcome

The Nation's Premier Source For Counterintelligence and Security Expertise

The National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC), a component of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), is dedicated to safeguarding information and assets critical to our nation's security from foreign intelligence and other adversarial threats. Our role is to strengthen counterintelligence and security activities across the United States Government (USG), share our expertise with public and private sector partners, and drive mission solutions to keep America safe.

LEADERSHIP



Michael Orlando
Deputy Director
*Senior Official Performing
the Duties of the Director*

"In 2021, NCSC once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to our sacred mission of protecting our national and economic security. America is stronger today because of our community leadership, our partnerships, and our people."



Patricia Larsen
Executive Director

"I'm so proud of the extraordinary work performed across NCSC in 2021. We have shown again and again that what we do at NCSC matters to national security, and sets the pace for the rest of the community."



Angela Spence
Chief of Staff

"Our workforce is the heart of NCSC, and we continue to prioritize diversity and inclusivity. It's created a family-like environment, leading our staff to another banner year in 2021."

Introduction

The Nation's Premier Source For Counterintelligence and Security Expertise

In the 1940s, U.S. and British physicists working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory shared technical secrets about America's atomic energy program with Soviet spies operating in the United States. The greatest secret of World War II was now in the hands of Soviet premier Joseph Stalin. The pilfered data accelerated Moscow's atomic program by years, and when the Soviets tested their first atomic device in 1949 – a replica of the U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, four years earlier – it sparked a nuclear arms race that would shape global relations and tensions for the next half-century.

The challenges we face from our global adversaries and competitors are far more sophisticated today than during the Cold War when an agent of a foreign power could pocket a schematic and walk it out of a secure facility. Threats to our national and economic security are increasingly aggressive and complex, and come from foreign intelligence services and non-state actors. The digital revolution, propelled by technologies evolving at a breakneck pace, has exponentially increased the breadth and depth of these threats. It is no longer a case of organizations responsible for countering those threats simply keeping pace with our adversaries. We must *outpace* them, by developing groundbreaking strategies and security policies for countering their methods and means, and creating innovative mission solutions.

2021: Year in Review documents the extraordinary efforts of NCSC to counter these evolving threats and safeguard our most sensitive information and assets. We are far from alone in this endeavor, and have teamed up with national and global partners from across the public and private sectors to pool our respective expertise, resources, methodologies, and best practices. Foremost among our shared goals are advancing security clearance reform initiatives; mitigating threats to the supply chain; improving detection of trusted insiders wishing to do harm; countering foreign technical threats; and arming our personnel with the tools and knowledge they need to strengthen the protection of our secrets, data, and technological innovations.

The stakes are high, but NCSC is in the game. And we're all in.

Intelligence
Community
Campus
Bethesda

Our Mission

The Nation's Premier Source For Counterintelligence and Security Expertise

Counterintelligence

Protecting the nation from foreign intelligence threats.



Oversee and coordinate production of national CI strategic analyses, damage assessments, and lessons learned from CI activities.



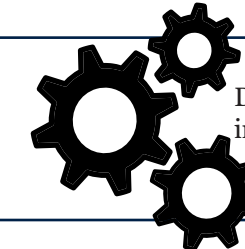
Disseminate public warnings of foreign intelligence threats.



Manage CI vulnerability surveys and outreach to the USG and private sector.



Identify priorities and produce strategies for analysis and collection.



Develop technology and information sharing capabilities.

Security

Safeguarding personnel, physical, and technical security.



Champion executive branch personnel security policies, processes, and program management on behalf of the DNI.



Drive development of insider threat programs across the USG and serve as the DNI's co-lead of the National Insider Threat Task Force.



Lead USG security clearance reform via implementation of Trusted Workforce 2.0 and Continuous Evaluation.



Protect diplomatic missions and USG facilities abroad from physical and technical security threats.

Our Profile

The Nation's Premier Source For Counterintelligence and Security Expertise

NCSC
in the
Lead

- Integration of USG-wide counterintelligence
- National Insider Threat Task Force

- Executive branch personnel security policies, processes, and reforms
- USG Operations Security (OPSEC) mission

We are EXPERIENCED.

Our staff has extensive backgrounds in intelligence and defense, law enforcement, and private industry. They have been on the front lines of leading-edge technical enterprises and research, developing mission solutions and methodologies to safeguard our national and economic security.

QUICK FACTS

The Director of NCSC is Presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed.



~350
Number of engagements with private sector organizations in 2021 alone.

We lead cross-sector groups on personnel security reform, supply chain risk management, and so much more.



Our award-winning training and education materials are widely used across government and private industry. We believe in "One Mission, One Team."

We are EXPERTS.

Our workforce has a wealth of expertise in counterintelligence and security, with backgrounds in analysis, operations, training, policy, and mission management.

We are INCLUSIVE.

We believe in diversity, equity, and accessibility. We want the best people in our organization, and welcome anyone with skills, experience, and dedication to protecting our national security.

And we COLLABORATE across all sectors.

Enterprise Focus

Our People

OUR COMMITMENT

NCSC is committed to creating an organizational culture that values fairness, transparency, and equality. We promote diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

In 2021, NCSC continued to edge closer to its goal of becoming the best place to work in the U.S. Government. Our people are the difference-makers, comprising a workforce that is diverse, inclusive, experienced, and collaborative.

Recruitment and retention continues to be a major priority at NCSC, as we strive to meet evolving CI and security mission needs in a continuously changing threat landscape. NCSC also advanced its commitment to employee engagement, transparent communication, and accountability to the workforce.

SHARPENING OUR ACUMEN

NCSC Speaker Series

NCSC hosted a series of speakers throughout the year that featured topics on the development of tactics, techniques, and procedures in intelligence services. The series also featured a retired FBI CI agent and author who spoke on her experience as a woman working in a male-dominated field. She ended her presentation with a signing of her book "It's Not About the Gun."

IC Women's Summit

NCSC played a leading role in shaping the 8th Annual IC Women's Summit in August 2021. Hosted by the National Reconnaissance Office, the theme in 2021 was LIFT: L = Leading, I = Including, F = Fostering, T = Teaming. Each day of the four-day summit centered around one of these key tenets.



The NCSC workforce raised **\$18,925** for donations to charities in support of the 2021 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). This year's CFC theme was *You Can Be The Face of Change* and the NCSC staff dug deep into their pockets, a reflection of their generous and civic-minded spirit.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

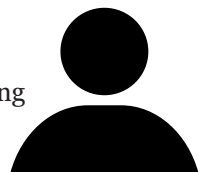
Every year, NCSC and the National Intelligence Professional Awards (NIPA) Program recognize individuals or groups throughout the IC who, through exceptional accomplishments or service, enhance the standing and stature of professions, functions, and disciplines that support the CI and security missions and advance our shared mission objectives.

Recipients of these awards are recognized for their contributions by the Director of NCSC and their accomplishments are communicated across the community. 2021 winners included teams from the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Navy.

NCSC EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

In 2021, NCSC named Nicholas K. its Employee of the Year.

Nicholas was recognized for his outstanding contributions leading national-level CI initiatives that resulted in big outcomes for the nation. He led various interagency efforts focused on 21st century cyber CI issues, including threats from commercial surveillance tools and against U.S. critical infrastructure. He drove strategic priorities for analysis, collection, and CI operations, and established a partnership between NCSC and the new National Cyber Director. In addition to his mission achievements, Nicholas has served as a mentor and role model to various officers within NCSC and across the IC. He has also worked to create a work environment that is diverse and inclusive, building collaboration teams where every member is a valued contributor.



2021

Mission Focus Area 1

Leading the CI and Security Communities

OVERVIEW

NCSC is responsible for leading and supporting CI and security activities of the U.S. Government, focusing on both emerging challenges and those that remain persistent. That includes developing – at both the IC and national levels – policies and strategies to safeguard our security and counter foreign intelligence threats.

NCSC also leads the IC in countering insider threats, managing supply chain risk, securing domestic and overseas facilities, and raising awareness of technical and cyber threats.

One top priority is to address efforts by foreign adversaries to obtain critical and emerging technologies from the private sector, academic, and research communities – activities that were on the rise in 2021. That prompted NCSC to increase and expand its external engagements across these sectors, raising threat awareness and guiding the protection of personnel and pioneering research within these sectors.

Another emerging challenge that NCSC took on in 2021 was the proliferation and abuse of foreign commercial surveillance technologies (CSTs) by U.S. global adversaries.

2021 AREAS OF EMPHASIS

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The unique opportunities and challenges posed by emerging technologies led NCSC to prioritize its engagements with technology sectors and research communities in 2021. To ensure America remains a global leader in artificial intelligence, the bioeconomy, autonomous systems, quantum technologies, and the semiconductor industry, NCSC developed and promoted solutions to protect cutting-edge research without stifling collaboration.

CYBER SURVEILLANCE

CSTs have been increasingly employed by foreign governments and those acting on their behalf to target and track journalists, dissidents, and others. In 2021, NCSC joined with the FBI in a collaborative effort to raise public awareness about this threat and explore mitigation strategies for countering the abuse of such technologies.



In 2021, the President designated NCSC as the lead for the National Operations Security (OPSEC) Program, a security discipline designed to view classified and unclassified information through the eyes of our adversaries and implement appropriate protections and countermeasures.

PERSONNEL VETTING

On behalf of the DNI, NCSC leads Trusted Workforce 2.0, an executive branch-wide initiative for modernizing and transforming the processes for vetting the Federal government workforce. Throughout the year, NCSC advised congressional oversight committees on progress toward reform, and, together with the Office of Personnel Management, released the Federal Personnel Core Vetting Doctrine, a visionary document to guide transformation efforts.

INSIDER THREAT

NCSC expanded its collaboration beyond Federal agencies and engaged with the private sector to mitigate risks from insider threats. Specifically, NCSC worked with the insurance sector, retail providers, and major food and agriculture organizations to identify their critical assets and share best practices on how to protect them. NCSC also teamed up with the National Intelligence University to brief students on policies and strategies pertaining to insider threats as part of their CI course of study.

Mission Focus Area 1

Leading the CI and Security Communities

RAISING AWARENESS

4th Annual National Supply Chain Integrity Month (April)

NCSC partnered with the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Department of Defense’s Center for the Development of Security Excellence to raise awareness about growing threats to private sector and USG supply chains; provide resources to help mitigate these risks; and equip USG and industry stakeholders with information about supply chain threats and risk mitigation.

3rd Annual National Insider Threat Awareness Month (September)

NCSC, the National Insider Threat Task Force, and other Federal partners promoted the theme of “Cultural Awareness” to educate government and industry organizations about the risks posed by insider threats and to encourage employees to recognize and report anomalous activities to allow early intervention.

OUR LEADERSHIP



NCSC is committed to leading the integration of the CI and security communities and providing strategic direction, guidance, and mission capabilities to achieve our collective goals, helping shape the CI and security environment for the future.

“[NCSC] is not only doing something that hasn’t really been done before, but you are doing it in unprecedented ways. Massive customer engagement. Massive information sharing. Absolutely extraordinary.”

Federal Reserve Board

2021 OUTREACH



GUIDANCE
Insider Risk Mitigation Programs: Food and Agriculture Sector



PODCAST
Discussed personnel security and clearance reform on the ClearedCast Podcast.



FACT SHEET
Protecting Critical and Emerging U.S. Technologies from Foreign Threats

2021 ACHIEVEMENTS



Highlighted foreign intelligence threats to the bioeconomy at the inaugural IC Biotech Community of Interest meeting. While biotechnology provides improvements in food, health care, and agriculture, NCSC discussed how it can also be misused by foreign adversaries and their associates.



Partnered with the Department of Defense in sponsoring a video contest about daily actions to create a positive workplace culture that avoids social missteps, increases engagement, values diversity, and reduces the risk of insider threats.



With the semiconductor industry emerging as a high-risk sector – and so integral to our everyday lives – NCSC provided threat briefings to leading industry associations and companies from across the country to share information on nation-state threats to their sector and best practices for risk mitigation.



Established a new team to advocate for CI and security resources and investment priorities, expanding on existing advocacy efforts for our non-IC partners.



The National Insider Threat Task Force celebrated its 10th anniversary.



Mission Focus Area 2

Building Trusted Partnerships

OVERVIEW

Throughout 2021, and even amid COVID-19 restrictions limiting external contacts, NCSC continued its mission of building trusted partnerships with government agencies at the Federal, state, and local levels; those in private industry; and worldwide government and academic partners. Among the many organizations we have developed robust partnerships with, we have adopted a simple, driving principle – their mission is *our* mission.

It begins with a willingness to share ideas and information, including methodologies and mission solutions, about the mutual challenges our organizations face. Those challenges include

supply chain risk management, personnel vetting and building a trusted workforce, insider threat mitigation, and a host of other topics.

Partner engagements, both in-person and virtual, provide opportunities to collaborate and leverage expertise to achieve a common objective – protecting our national and economic security. Many of these engagements include classified and unclassified briefings to those managing high risk sectors. At the core of every engagement is an intangible that is foundational to collaboration and information sharing – mutual trust among colleagues and peers with a common mission and shared goals.

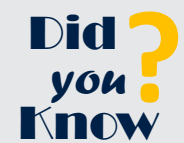
2021 AREAS OF EMPHASIS

● FSLTT PARTNERS

NCSC continued to strengthen its partnerships with Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments in 2021, enabling us to share information about current and future CI-specific threats and technologies. NCSC engagements highlighted best practices and challenges surrounding supply chain, critical infrastructure, and governance systems. NCSC also emphasized the risks of insider threats and the importance of identifying and countering threats from within organizations, providing guidelines on improving security.

● PRIVATE INDUSTRY & ACADEMIA

To reduce threats to the private sector and maintain academic integrity at the university level, NCSC offered resources and guidance on insider risk mitigations and OPSEC measures. NCSC also met regularly with business and academic leaders aiming to develop and implement their own insider risk and cybersecurity programs; understand the risk to their organizations from foreign entities; share best practices; and engage in security clearance reform deliberations.



In 2021, NCSC engaged more than 6,000 participants during CI events held throughout government, industry, and academia. That included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, briefed by NCSC on CI threats stemming from Russian and Chinese intelligence services and non-traditional collectors.

● FOREIGN PARTNERS

Our foreign partners and allies continue to play a pivotal role in identifying, assessing, and mitigating foreign intelligence threats in the United States and abroad. In 2021, critical information was exchanged with our partner nations against the growing threats from China, Russia, and other foreign influences. Information was also shared through these partnerships on best practices for personnel security vetting, mitigating insider threat and counterintelligence risks, and managing impacts from COVID-19.

● THE “FIVE EYES”

NCSC continued its close collaboration among the Five Eyes partners, which include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. NCSC provided CI threat briefings, participated in international conferences, and shared its improved and standardized approaches to supply chain integrity, personnel vetting, physical security, and insider threat countermeasures. NCSC also increased awareness of foreign intelligence threats among our allies’ academic communities, impacting research integrity and academic freedoms.

Mission Focus Area 2

Building Trusted Partnerships

OUR COLLABORATION

To meet increasing demand from the private sector and academic communities aiming to protect their organizations from foreign threats, NCSC met with a variety of industry leaders in 2021, including the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of State Procurement Officials, and leaders from the Global Risk Management Program. These meetings also provided a means for industry leaders to share their top priorities, successes, and concerns with NCSC.

OUR ENGAGEMENT

Organizations

- ✓ National trade associations
- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Business consortiums
- ✓ Foreign governments
- ✓ U.S. Government agencies
- ✓ State and local governments
- ✓ Academic institutions

Sectors

- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Critical manufacturing
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Financial services
- ✓ Food and agriculture
- ✓ Healthcare
- ✓ Information technology
- ✓ Public utilities
- ✓ Research and development
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ And so many more!

2021 OUTREACH



Addressed industry, academic, and other leaders at a day-long China/CI outreach event at Arkansas State University.



Discussed the risks facing digital government as well as mitigation strategies on the NASPO Pulse Podcast.



Hosted a classified briefing for leaders of the oil and natural gas pipeline industries on threats to the sector posed by foreign intelligence threats.

2021 ACHIEVEMENTS



NCSC hosted the senior local representatives from the “Five Eyes” intelligence and security services for a CI-focused roundtable. NCSC senior leaders and an FBI subject matter expert provided briefings on topics such as safeguarding the bioeconomy and the National Insider Threat Awareness Month campaign in September.



NCSC held its third virtual roundtable with Federal partners, focusing on supply chain threats and foreign intelligence cyber threats. Thirty-eight Federal departments and agencies attended the session, where further opportunities to strengthen CI partnerships and outreach were discussed.



NCSC briefed the National Association of Counties’ 60-member Information Technology Standing Committee on general counterintelligence issues, including supply chain security, and how these issues apply to state and local governments.



In partnership with academia, NCSC participated in an international panel at Harvard University’s Belfer Center discussing the security of international supply chains in the digital era.

Mission Focus Area 3

Sharing Our Expertise

OVERVIEW

Since its inception, NCSC has accumulated extensive knowledge about the intentions, objectives, and methods of our global adversaries and competitors, and gained insights into the threats posed to our national and economic security. In recent years, we have redoubled our efforts to share our acumen and experience with our mission partners from across the public and private sectors, strengthening our collective capacity to safeguard our security and prosperity.

We continued to inform high-level policymakers, offered guidance to sector leaders from technology to agriculture; and advised government organizations from the smallest municipalities to global multilateral alliances.

Foundational to the trusted partnerships we've forged, our external engagements provide not only timely and holistic information about foreign intelligence threats, but the best practices, implementation guides, and proven methodologies needed to mitigate those threats.

In turn, our mission partners have used such tools and information to strengthen their personnel security and insider threat programs, reduce supply chain vulnerabilities, and protect intelligence and trade secrets from foreign adversaries and competitors.

2021 AREAS OF EMPHASIS

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE THREATS

In 2021, we maintained our commitment to share our CI expertise with private industry, advising business groups from the National Association of Manufacturers to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce about emerging foreign intelligence threats to the U.S. business and research communities.

Our efforts to share threat information about China and other nation-states with local government and business leaders stretched from coast to coast, reaching audiences in Arkansas, South Dakota, Georgia, Tennessee, Oregon, and California.



SUPPLY CHAIN

NCSC continued to build its global reputation as a center of excellence for supply chain risk management. In 2021, the Center hosted the 7th National Supply Chain Workshop; led the 4th annual National Supply Chain Integrity Month; and partnered with others from prestigious think tanks to the United Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre.



In 2021, NCSC developed awareness materials in coordination with the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency that were accessed over **900,000 times** by government, industry, and critical infrastructure personnel.

2021 ACHIEVEMENTS



Collaborated with a mission partner to produce a number of award-winning insider threat resources, including an Insider Threat Awareness Month website; an insider threat Sentry Mobile Application; and an animated video about insider threat resilience.



Played a key role in numerous CI and security events, including –

- Maritime Counterintelligence Conference
- NCSC/State Department Russia-China Symposium
- Technical Security Symposium
- Five Eyes International Countermeasures Conference
- National Security Psychology Symposium

Mission Focus Area 3

Sharing Our Expertise

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Public outreach is a priority at NCSC and a means for raising awareness among our partners and the public about the threats we face, and how we can protect our national security and industrial secrets from foreign adversaries and competitors.

“Whoever acquires a quantum computer can break every encryption system we have.”

Michael Orlando, NCSC
CNBC, October 2021

2021 OUTREACH



GUIDANCE
Insider Threat Mitigation for U.S. Critical Infrastructure Entities



PODCASTS
Discussed threats and challenges with podcasters from the International Spy Museum, the American Hospital Association, and CBS News.



GUIDANCE
Protect Your Organization from the Foreign Intelligence Threat



BULLETINS
Safeguarding Our Future, a series for private industry and the general public.

DIGITAL HISTORY



In October 2021, NCSC launched the first iteration of a new digital exhibit on the *Evolution of Espionage in America*. The online exhibit is filled with compelling stories of espionage and betrayal during the Revolutionary War and Civil War, with additional sections on World Wars I and II, the Cold War, and more to come.

The exhibit is hosted on Intelintelligence.gov, a public website, and can be accessed via this link – <https://intelligence.gov/wall-of-spies>.

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