

AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATION



“USING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE, WE ARE DISCOVERING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT WE NEVER SAW BEFORE.”

— SPECIAL AGENT TIM RIES, DIRECTOR OF WARFIGHTING INTEGRATION,
AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

AFOSI TAKES WAR ON CRIME TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) provides professional investigative services to commanders of all Air Force activities. AFOSI identifies, investigates, and neutralizes criminal, terrorist, and espionage threats to Air Force and Department of Defense personnel and resources. With such an important mandate and a staff of over 2,500 personnel in over 200 offices in 40 countries, they need to be able to leverage information to its fullest.

Since 1997, the AFOSI has used Cognos to streamline data collection, automate data retrieval, monitor cases, analyze costs, and provide valuable performance metrics for their agents and staff worldwide. Business intelligence (BI) empowers their agents with the best information to eradicate criminal and terrorist activities domestically and abroad.

ENHANCED VISIBILITY

With such a broad mandate and mission, the AFOSI has to always consider the bigger picture. This means understanding how any one case—be it the action of

informants, drug dealers, arms dealers, bank robbers, or money launderers—affects every other case in their system. Each action of these individuals sets off a chain of events, and in order to stay ahead of any criminal activities, the AFOSI needed to leverage collected intelligence using business intelligence.

Prior to 1997, the scope of data collected by their system was extremely structured and relatively limited, and the access to data reporting was restricted. There were no data sharing capabilities and therefore no visibility throughout the organization. In order to combat this problem the AFOSI began integrating BI with some of their key information systems, including CACTIS (Crime and Counter-Intelligence Terrorism Information System) and I2MS (Investigative Information Management System). The result was TABIS (The Air Force Business Intelligence System), which is now key firepower against criminal activity.

“We use business intelligence to make a lot of big decisions,” says Special Agent Tim Ries, Director of Warfighting Integration at the AFOSI*. “If a General has questions about the status of a case, he can drill down into the system to see where the delays are. Drill all the way down to the case level, down to the specific agent. We can see lab status, man-hours served—we now have amazing visibility.”

INCREASED DATA INTEGRITY

Another immediate benefit the AFOSI garnered from business intelligence was the ability to identify and fix inaccuracies in their data. “One of the first benefits

ROI FACTORS FOR AFOSI

- Reports which used to take up to 30 days to develop using custom SQL queries are now available in mere minutes.
- 35 standardized reports that used to take up to several hours to run have now been replaced by a completely self-service, ad-hoc information environment that has allowed the AFOSI to reallocate a 4 person IT department.
- 98% data integrity and improved information delivery worldwide.
- A 50% reduction in case resolution times.

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that we realized was that our relational database was flawed,” says Mr. Ries. “When we started to investigate our data integrity, we were pretty dismayed. We discovered that the data from 1992-96 was inaccurate and inconsistent. We now have 98 per cent data integrity, which is outstanding.”

In recognition for improving visibility into the organization and enhancing information integrity and clarity, Mr. Ries’ department was awarded the OSI Commander Innovation Award and was also nominated for a prestigious Air Force Chief of Staff Award.

More importantly, however, the use of business intelligence restored the staff’s faith and confidence in their decision-making capabilities. Whether presenting before Congress or the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the AFOSI now knows that they have the right information and the right answers to vital questions pertaining to ongoing investigations and case management.

FASTER CASE RESOLUTION

With business intelligence, the AFOSI has also been able to break down nine measures of the investigative process to create a full case management system. By being able to break these processes into segues with affixed standards attached, (i.e. 90 days to complete criminal investigations, 180 days to complete base-level fraud investigations) the AFOSI can ensure that they are proceeding efficiently, following investigative best practices, and measuring their success in real terms.

Resolving cases quickly puts much-needed funds and resources back in the pocket of the AFOSI. With business intelligence, the AFOSI can quickly identify the factors that were slowing them down. They can immediately pinpoint delays in the lab, slowdowns by agents, lack of proper resources, or other contributing factors that might be standing in their way. As a result, cases that once took 180 days to resolve are now being closed in 90 days or less. This means that vital staff resources can be freed up more quickly, so that they can move on to the next pressing case.

Automating processes has been a contributing factor towards this improved expediency. By nature, the agents of the AFOSI would rather be in the field, tracking criminals, than sitting in front of a computer. Using BI,

the AFOSI has been able to automate many repetitive and labor-intensive IT activities such as report writing and file transfers. As an example, automating report generation has saved the organization seven days per case, enabling agents to spend less time waiting for the vital information they need to fight crime.

BETTER METRICS

One of the most difficult things in law enforcement is to measure the success of any case—there are just so many factors involved. With business intelligence, the AFOSI has managed to break down the processes that result in a successful case. Whether a case leads to deterrence, strong sentences, drugs off the streets, or a combination of factors, they can look at cases as a whole and better determine why they may have succeeded or failed. They can then realign resources, agents, or procedures quickly and easily to further strengthen their crime fighting abilities.

Business intelligence has also provided the AFOSI with the ability to validate and communicate the effectiveness of its agents to Congress, the Inspector General of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, and other key decision-makers. With BI metrics they have been able to justify their organization’s business case and receive increases in money and manpower at a time when government budgets are tight. Staff has embraced the system, due to its time-saving capabilities, but also as a means to attain recognition for their hard work. It has helped them justify more resources for important projects and put more agents in the field. It has even helped facilitate the awarding of medals and promotions due to the clarity and metrics it can offer to measure exceptional performance.

In his spare time, Mr. Ries conducts presentations on the value of their business intelligence system to groups such as the International Association of Chief’s of Police, the Department of Defense Counter Intelligence Agency, the New York Police Department, and others who are interested in fully leveraging information in the war against crime.

“I now do presentations all over the country,” says Mr. Ries. “As a matter of fact, all over the world, on object relational investigative management systems because that’s what we built.”

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