

U.S. intelligence looks to the Web

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. presidents rely on daily secret reports on national threats, but some of those reports are now coming from public Internet sources, officials say. The top-secret President's Daily Brief compiled covert operative reports, spy photos and other highly classified sources. But more and more, intelligence agencies are getting their information from sources available to anyone with an Internet connection, USA Today said Tuesday. Intelligence officers used this "open-source intelligence" to compile evidence on the Iranian nuclear program, for example, and agencies increasingly sift through various Web sites used by foreign governments or terrorist agencies to develop their reports. Frances Townsend, a former national security adviser in the Bush administration, notes "a lot of what we know about our (terrorist) adversaries comes from statements and videos they put on the Internet." Open-source intelligence provides almost 90 percent of the information intelligence officials need to develop their product, officials said. Officials told the newspaper the implementation process is slow-going due to the cult of secrecy in the intelligence community, but note that it has become "a normal part of what we do." "Open source is the world of the future," said Charlie Allen, undersecretary of intelligence at the Department of Homeland Security.

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