How OSAC's RISC Analysts Can Benefit Your Global Security Operations

Traveler Toolkit; Contingency Planning

6/28/2018

Overview
Whether you are the Chief Security Officer for a large multinational corporation or a standalone global security manager at a small non-profit, OSAC and its support staff can be a tremendous resource for to your security operations abroad. However, many organizations are not aware of the full scope of OSAC's support capability and do not fully leverage all of the resources provided. This report specifically focuses on one resource, the Research and Information Support Center (RISC) analysts, and how U.S. private-sector organizations can leverage the expertise of these individuals to bolster security operations abroad.

What is RISC?
RISC is OSAC's staff of analysts, program officers, and coordinators dedicated to monitoring threats to U.S. private-sector operations, personnel, facilities, and intellectual property abroad. With access to a broad range of classified and unclassified reporting from U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, as well as open-source information, the RISC staff track social, political, and economic issues that impact U.S. private sector security operations abroad. RISC is composed of three units: Outreach and Engagement, Research and Analysis, and Global Security.

Who are the RISC analysts?
The RISC analysts fall under the Research and Analysis Unit (RAU). RAU is a team comprised of analysts that covers both regional and functional areas. The team's ten analysts cover the world, as well as cybersecurity, health and pandemic issues, and sector-specific security issues. The analysts are subject matter experts (SMEs), not only in their specific areas of responsibility, but also in analyzing and responding to threats specific to the U.S. private sector. They are well connected within the security communities of their various

regions or topic areas, making them excellent resources for security managers across the many sectors that OSAC serves.

How do RISC analysts assist OSAC constituents?

A key function of RISC analysts is to develop and disseminate analytical products covering the security issues facing U.S. private-sector organizations overseas. These reports focus on topics from terrorist attacks and political violence to crime, cybersecurity, and health issues. They generally range from two to five pages, and aim not only to inform but to equip the reader with mitigation measures. They often include information from post-incident assessments, benchmarking surveys, and trend analysis.

In addition to producing in-house analytical products, OSAC analysts also compile and share other resources from the State Department, open-source research, or relevant documents from other organizations or government agencies. One example of internal State Department coordination and information sharing is the Crime and Safety Reports, which are produced for each U.S. diplomatic post around the world. These reports are written by the Regional Security Officer (RSO) at each post, with the RISC analysts serving as coordinators for review and dissemination. Another example is the sharing of alerts and advisories produced by the Bureau of Consular Affairs, all of which can be found on the OSAC website. Information sharing from outside of the Department is reflected in the posting of Daily News and the documents found in the Resource Library.

Producing and sharing information and analytical products on behalf of OSAC is a central function on the analysts. However, this is only one component of an analyst's full portfolio. The analysts also spend a significant portion of their time responding to private-sector inquiries. These are questions that arrive via phone or email related to the analyst's portfolio. Often, constituents ask our analysts about the implications of a specific event or occurrence that is significantly affecting their operations abroad. For example, you may find it useful to contact an analyst if you are navigating a significant security event such as contentious elections or a terrorist attack, organizing or reviewing upcoming travel to a high risk destination, or developing contingency plans.

Additionally, constituents also request broader information about the security environment in a location or connections to specific individuals or resources relevant to a particular region or issue. These often take the form of in-person or phone consultations where an analyst briefs a constituent on the security concerns specific to their area of expertise. These one-on-ones are

great for new or transitioning security managers looking to establish meaningful connections within their respective portfolios.
Finally, our analysts often serve as SMEs for security-focused events and speaking engagements across the world. These include country or regional council meetings, working group meetings, and sector-specific conferences. Analysts are also sometimes asked to brief groups of constituents on things such as upcoming travel to high risk areas or specific ongoing security situations. OSAC makes every effort to support these engagements depending on availability, timing, and funding.

When should I contact a RISC analyst?
Whenever you are faced with a tough security situation abroad and you would like additional insight or outside input, give the relevant analyst a call or send them an email. Often, constituents do not have access to regional specialists internally, so they look to the RISC analyst for context surrounding stories that are in the news. Maybe you notice that the same security issue is affecting multiple organizations in your respective sector or region. Let one of our analysts know, as this may be an opportunity to produce an OSAC analytical report that includes benchmarking or security guidance. You can also email the OSAC distribution lists which go to the relevant analysts as well as counterparts from other RISC teams.
In any case, come equipped with specific questions that you would like to have answered. You may want to review documents such as recent OSAC Analysis reports or the Crime and Safety Report first. The Bureau of Consular Affairs website is also an incredibly helpful resource. These resources can inform, and in some cases answer, your questions. Some examples of common questions are included below:

What are you able to tell me about the ongoing security situation in _____?
What are other organizations doing in response to the security situation in _____?
What are the factors that I should be monitoring as part of my contingency planning?
I saw that OSAC published a report on _____. How might that impact my sector?

If applicable, ask the analyst to put you in contact with the RSO, other regional contacts, or organizations similar to your own. However, keep in mind that these contacts may not always be available or advisable for certain situations. For example, OSAC and private sector-related duties are only a subset of a RSOs overall work portfolio. As a result, analysts may encourage other points of contact (POCs) in some cases.

What are the limitations of the RISC analysts?
Though the analysts bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to their respective portfolios, there are occasionally questions that they are unable to answer for any number of reasons. It is sometimes the case that the request is best handled by another individual or office. In those cases, the analysts will refer you to a POC that is able to assist you. That individual could be the RSO, another SME within the government, another constituent/organization, etc. One example that occurs frequently is requests for information on visa processes in a particular country. In that instance, the analyst would refer you to Consular Affairs either at the relevant embassy/consulate or in Washington—whoever is best able to assist.
Analysts are sometimes also limited in their ability to provide direct guidance on specific security issues relevant to your organization. This includes things such as saying definitively that you should or should not send travellers to a particular destination, or prescribing which hotels, transportation, or security providers to use in-country. Though, it is sometimes possible to provide benchmarking data or general references to what other organizations are doing.

What do I do after hours or in an emergency situation?
If you experience an emergency after hours that requires OSAC assistance, you can call the on-call duty officer. They can be reached at any time by either phone or email at 202-309-5056 and osacemergency@state.gov. This contact point is manned 24/7 by a member of the RISC staff. Though the individual on call will not always be a RISC analyst or have specific expertise in the region where you are requesting assistance, each Duty Officer is equipped to provide constituents with any and all OSAC resources that are available to assist based on the situation. If warranted, the Duty Officer may also include the relevant analyst as part of their response.

Further Information
For further information on your relationship with the RISC analysts, contact OSAC.

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BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Additional Resources
OSAC Analysis
Crime and Safety Reports
Consular Alerts
Daily News
Resource Library
OSAC Events
Major Events (Olympics, World Cup, etc.)
Country Councils
Common Interest Councils

Distribution Lists
Cyber
Health
Major Events
Africa
East Asia and the Pacific
Europe
Near East
South and Central Asia
Western Hemisphere