

FIREPLACES and informant motivation

A NEW FRAMEWORK HAS BEEN DEvised TO HELP INFORMANT HANDLERS BETTER IDENTIFY MOTIVATIONS.

The effective recruitment and deployment of informants is critical to law enforcement and intelligence agencies being able to identify and manage threats.

Accurately identifying a source's motivation for providing information enables an informant handler to better influence the informant's behaviour. This is central to an informant handler's command of the authorised relationship.

Early frameworks for identifying motivation, including the mnemonic MICE (Money, Ideology, Coercion, and Ego) have directed informant handlers to explore motivations that may provide a better understanding of their informants. However, motivation is more nuanced and multidimensional than the MICE framework proposes.

To address this, a new mnemonic, FIREPLACES is proposed: Financial, Ideology, Revenge, Excitement, Protection, Lifestyle, Access, Coercion, Ego, and Sentence. This alternative framework provides an

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enhanced understanding of the complexities of informant cooperation and can be used by informant handlers to identify a range of motivations. Informants report on threat groups and individuals of interest by providing a unique human intelligence insight.

MOTIVATION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

In the UK, authorised informants are legally defined within the *Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)* as those who have maintained or established a personal relationship for a covert purpose of providing access to, disclosing, or obtaining information. Securing the services of a person to inform requires an understanding of their motivation.

Motivation is a form of influence that can affect intentions and behaviours. Informant handlers may better understand an informant's motivation(s) by exploring their morals, interests, choices, goals, and perceptions.

Interestingly, there are two key aspects of motivation and human behaviour:

1. Nature and direction of motivation – concerned with the reasons and decisions to act
2. The magnitude of motivation – referring to the commitment to pursuing an act.

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LEARNING THE MNEMONIC

The FIREPLACES framework acknowledges the greater diversity of motivations and the dynamic and interchangeable nature of informant motivations when compared with earlier models.



It reflects the multidimensional nature of co-operation while also acknowledging that an informant can, simultaneously, hold positive and negative reasons for motivation, depending on who and what is being collected.

The benefits of identifying both the nature and extent of an informant’s motivation include enhanced control over their activities and identifying and managing

their vulnerabilities – ensuring safer future tasking deployments. Identifying an informant’s motivation also helps ascertain the limits of their co-operation, the longevity of the relationship, and the potential for informant misconduct.

The FIREPLACES framework is summarised in the table below.

FIREPLACES	
F	Financial: Includes the receipt of monetary reward or in-kind payment (i.e. payment of rent, tools, vehicles, phones, clothes).
I	Ideology / Moral: Information is provided about a person or group who possess ideas or beliefs at odds with those held by the informant (i.e. drug dealing or terrorist tactics).
R	Revenge: Information is provided to harm or place another in a detrimental position (i.e. arrested) in response to a previous injury or perceived wrongdoing (i.e. as a result of an acrimonious breakup of a personal or criminal relationship).
E	Excitement: Undertaking the role of an informant offers the individual a feeling of excitement, eagerness, or arousal.
P	Protection: Passing information to authorities to protect the informant from persons or networks threatening them, their criminal enterprises, or family. The cooperation aims to provide information that encourages police action to diminish this threat.
L	Lifestyle: The role played by the informant provides the individual with an enhanced lifestyle, either as a consequence of deployments and/or payments.

A	Access: The informant relationship provides an opportunity for counter-penetration to identify agency interest in offending networks and associates. This may include deliberate infiltration by criminals to understand the nature of police tasking and levels of interest in their or their competitor’s criminal enterprises.
C	Coercion: Information is provided to avoid carrying out a threat made by an official (i.e. the threat of deportation; being prevented access to or from a country; or blackmail after being caught in compromising situations).
E	Ego: Undertaking the role of an informant enhances the individual's self-esteem or self-importance. Where this ego starts to impact the veracity of provided information, these are sometimes colloquially known as ‘Walter-Mitty’ informants.
S	Sentence: Information is shared to mitigate the length of a likely forthcoming prison sentence or release from detention.

HOW CAN FIREPLACES HELP HANDLERS?

RIPA 2000 requires both regular reviews, and where appropriate, renewals of the informant’s authority. This necessitates an examination of an informant's tasking activity, their general behaviour and demeanour, and the interrogation of open and closed datasets. All of these are explored to identify new and emerging risks and operational opportunities.

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The FIREPLACES framework not only increases the probability of identifying motives but can also enhance control, efficacy, and longevity of authorised relationships; potentially increasing ethical intelligence elicitation.

Disseminating the framework can be achieved by utilising existing knowledge platforms that provide an opportunity to offer a more detailed explanation within UK government doctrine, academic articles, and continuous professional development.