



**(S//SI//REL) SIGINT Analysts: In-Flight GSM Is No Joke**

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(S//SI//REL) *In-flight GSM analysis can help track targets.*

(TS//SI//REL) What do the President of Pakistan, a cigar smuggler, an arms dealer, a counterterrorism target, and a combating-proliferation target have in common? They all used their everyday GSM phone during a flight, and were tracked by the SIGINT System, because the phone number was tasked in [OCTAVE](#). Since the commercial birth of in-flight

GSM on March 20, 2008 the volume of tasked numbers seen during flight has risen to an average of 17 targets per day.\* The volume of in-flight GSM users has increased from hundreds per month to thousands per day over the past two years and is still climbing... In-flight GSM hasn't reached its cruising altitude yet (ha-ha).

(TS//SI//REL) The use of in-flight GSM analysis can help identify the travel of a target -- not to mention the other mobile devices (and potentially individuals) onboard the same plane with them. Sound helpful? Read on... Thanks to collaborative efforts, daily in-flight GSM reports are generated by the [ASSOCIATION](#) and [CHALKFUN](#) teams. An analyst can quickly view these reports\*\* to see if one of their targets of interest has been on the move. I can also assist with some tracking efforts using a self-developed analytic.

(TS//SI//REL) Score one for the SIGINT system in its ability to collect location updates when mobile phones traverse the GSM network. The in-flight GSM system is available only while the aircraft is in the cruising portion of the flight. All the target has to do is power on his phone and it will register (location update) with one of the 8 Visitor Location Registers ([VLR](#)s) dedicated to handling in-flight GSM traffic. No voice, SMS, or data session (communication) has to occur in order for us to detect that a mobile phone is onboard an airplane. However, in case you are curious, we have picked up Tweets and Facebook updates from individuals cruising 33,000 feet above the earth.

(S//SI//REL) What do Emirates Air, Wataniya Air, Air Blue, and Royal Jordanian have in common? Right, they are just four of the more than 20 airlines that offer in-flight GSM. Some of the other airlines that offer (or plan to offer) in-flight GSM in the coming years are Libyan Air, Afriqiyah Air, Saudi Arabian Air, TAP Portugal, Air France, and Lufthansa. As you can see, many of those airlines serve "target-rich" areas.

(U) Is that an airplane on a barge? No, that's an in-flight GSM solution on a cruise line, silly. Hapag-Lloyd Cruises has installed the OnAir in-flight GSM technology on their flagship MS EUROPA (the scheduled cruises can be found online). OnAir is marketing the versatility of its in-flight GSM solution in markets other than the airline industry. What's next, trains?!? We'll have to keep watching.

(S//SI//REL) Contact me if you want to learn more about in-flight GSM analysis and how it can help you in your efforts, or if you just want to hear more. Yeah, there's more -- I can bore you for a couple of hours with interesting in-flight GSM discussion... My sid is [REDACTED] "

(U) Notes:

\* (TS//SI//REL) This data was compiled by [REDACTED] (CSEC) from ASSOCIATION's daily in-flight roamer report.

\*\* (TS//SI//REL) The ASSOCIATION report is viewed by clicking on the "roamer reports" option, then selecting the "in-flight" link. The CHALKFUN report can be viewed by clicking on the "reports" option on the main page after login.

(S//SI//REL) Editor's note: For background, see the earlier article "[SIGINT Analysts: New Ways to Track Targets Using SMS and GSM Are Being Developed.](#)"

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