

**Transcript: "What It's Really Like to Work at NSA"**  
**Episode 6 of No Such Podcast from the National Security Agency**

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Doug Nieman: When we think about hostage recovery, the first question might be, you know, why would NSA be involved in that? And really, it comes down to our signals intelligence mission. We could potentially produce intelligence that reveals the location, what they're planning to do, what their intentions are, and of course that's very, very valuable information that could assist in a recovery operation.

Cam Potts: Hello and welcome to another week of No Such Podcast. I'm one of your host, Cam Potts, alongside my wonderful co-host, Christy Wicks. Yes, and today we are talking about the National Security Operations Center, also known as NSOC. It is a 24-7 watch floor dubbed as the heartbeat of NSA, responsible for monitoring events all around the world. If something is happening and it's outside of the U.S., NSOC is there. Joining us at the table today to talk all things NSOC is Doug Neiman, the director of NSOC, and Yemi Rotemi, one of NSA's systems analysts. Doug, Yemi, Doug, thanks for joining us. Awesome, awesome. Well, let's get right into the conversation. Doug, I'm going to start with you. Tell us a bit about NSOC. I know I gave a little bit in the beginning, but you're the director of NSOC, so of course you would know more. So tell us about what is NSOC and what does it do?

Doug Nieman: It's a pleasure to be here. The National Security Operations Center, definitely a very special place at NSA. Since 1972, when we first opened our doors, NSOC was created so that NSA would be able to prepare for a crisis, respond to that crisis, and make sure that we bring together all the right people that we need to be able to do that hard job. So the goal is to be prepared for anything, and the teams spend a lot of time preparing for everything that might happen. So fundamentally, it's all about making sure that NSA can do our missions around the clock. And it's 24-7. We're always there. We're always getting that job done. It doesn't matter what's happening around the world. The team's in place. And when I talk about our missions, of course I mean NSA's primary two missions, signals intelligence, where we produce foreign intelligence to serve our policymakers and our combatant commanders, and of course our cybersecurity mission. What we do drives from our national priorities. So the nation lays out the priorities for the intelligence community, and we make sure that the National Security Agency is prepared to deliver the intelligence that our nation needs and that our warfighters need around the globe. We don't do this alone. It really is a collaborative effort. There are a lot of other operation centers that we partner with, places like the White House Situation Room, our own NSA Cybersecurity Operations Center, where Yemi works, very familiar with the expertise that's resonant there, and even other organizations like the Defense Special Missile and Aerospace Center, known as DEFSCMAC, another one of my favorite organizations. That one's interesting because it's actually three agencies from the intelligence community that all come together in one place. We have, of course, NSA, but we also have the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. So really powerful place to help provide indications and warning and intelligence about missile and space events. Just one example where NSOC leverages strong partnerships across our agency, across the intelligence community, and of course across all of government. Really, the entire goal of all of this is to make sure that we can deliver actionable intelligence to decision makers and to the warfighter.

Cristy Wicks: Now, when you say decision makers, do you mean the policymakers up to the executive branch? I know you answered to the DIRNSA, but what about what leadership?

Doug Nieman: Yeah, absolutely. And it certainly includes policymakers up to and including the president, but leaders across our government. And of course, warfighters. I know today we're going to talk a little bit about how NSA supports the warfighter and our troops downrange. We're also going to talk a little bit about hostages and what our role is there. And then finally, I know Yemi is going to talk about adversary attacks in the cyber domain.

Cam Potts: OK, and I'm sure it has to be quite exciting to be the director of NSOC. And at any point, you may be talking with the White House, maybe talking with the president of the United States on behalf of national security concerns. Now, I know you mentioned that the NSOC supports the warfighter, supports our troops. So I'm a visual person, and I'm sure I could speak for Christy or that as well. So can we get into what does that support look like?

Doug Nieman: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So at the heart of what we do, NSA is a combat support agency. And part of our charter is to ensure that we support the warfighter, the brave men and women that are serving our nation around the globe. Part of our job is to help ensure their safety and to make sure that we're providing the intelligence to support them. And so a little bit of history. So if we go back decades and look at how NSA has provided that kind of support, we used to have something called the special support activity. And that was an element where we would actually deploy teams that were ready on a moment's notice to fly out and be co-located with special operations forces. And they would bring a lot of gear with them to ensure that they were able to maintain communications and stay in touch with the agency and of course with NSOC. So it was really providing tailored support to the warfighter on the ground with very short turnaround. And that's the kind of intelligence that can save lives and enable the troops to make very rapid decisions, both from an offense and a defensive situation. We're not just trying to enable them with intelligence. We're trying to make sure that they stay secure and safe as well.

Cam Potts: All right. So Doug, as we've heard some of our leaders mentioned before, what we do has not changed, but how we do it has. You know, you talk about the SSA's or the special support activity force. I can only imagine how difficult it may have been for them to deploy these type of units or deploy this type of technology on the ground most of the times in very harmful conditions. So could you take us to maybe the next phase of NSOC?

Doug Nieman: Yeah, absolutely. I think the next phase was really around the events of 9-11, September 11, 2001, the attacks, the terrorist attacks, and of course, the resulting situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. And what we saw at the time, even the day of 9-11, is that NSOC really surged to ensure that we were able to support and respond. Some of our functions that where we normally had one person were actually triple manned. So we had three people actually performing the function that normally one person could do just to make sure we had everything that we would need to be able to accomplish the mission. In the initial weeks after 9-11, NSOC responded to over 1,900 requests for information. So there was a huge demand signal for intelligence and information from our agency, and NSOC, of course, was on point to provide that.

Cristy Wicks: So after 9-11, the rest of the government came to NSA and NSOC for intelligence and information.

Doug Nieman: Yeah, absolutely. And of course, not just to NSOC. We certainly play our role, and NSOC for NSA was certainly a key element, but really was, you know, we play our role for the intelligence community. NSA really does have a big role in how we support our nation. So within NSA, NSOC is on point to make sure that we're responding 24-7, that we're doing all the things that NSA needs to do in a crisis. And it's safe to say we were a point of convergence, so things really did kind of come together in NSOC.

Cristy Wicks: Well, that sounds like a lot of pressure and responsibility.

Doug Nieman: Yeah, it certainly is, but that's our job. It's our responsibility. We're very proud of that. We take that job very seriously. When troops are deploying, of course, things have changed a lot in those years since we used to deploy teams. The intelligence community and NSA do still send people out in the field, but we're able now with newer technologies, to keep them off the front lines, so they're, I wouldn't say safe, but they're certainly in a much safer situation, and they don't have to deploy with the, you know, pounds and pounds of gear that were required in years past. We have the ability to ensure that our folks forward our insecure communications through a variety of methods, and we can get the intelligence that we need out to the warfighter in a different way. So really, the functions are the same after all these years, but the way that we do it has changed dramatically, and it's really enabled us to kind of increase the support that NSA can provide, very, very timely, very actionable. And again, it's about making sure both from an offensive and defensive situation, we want to make sure those troops are kept safe, that they have the intelligence that they need, and of course, their cybersecurity is in place to make sure that they're not vulnerable as well.

Cam Potts: Awesome. Well, thanks so much for doing that work, Doug. It's truly incredible. And while we're still talking about the function of NSOC, I'd love to go back to one of the other things that you mentioned, NSOC supports, or it helps. It helps with hostage recovery. Could you tell us more? What does that look like? How has that been for NSOC?

Doug Nieman: Yeah, so I guess when we think about hostage recovery, the first question might be, you know, how, why would NSA be involved in that? And really, it comes down to our signals intelligence mission. The fact that NSA can produce foreign intelligence that might enable us to know about the captors that are holding those hostages, we could potentially produce intelligence that reveals the location, what they're planning to do, what their intentions are. And of course, that's very, very valuable information that could assist in a recovery operation. Within NSOC, we have an organization called the Hostage Event Management Team. So we have a team of people whose job it is to manage that function. Of course, our teams around the clock are actually working on hostage events. And again, it's a larger collaborative effort. We work with folks across the intelligence community and across the Department of Defense, and even beyond really a whole-of-government approach.

Cristy Wicks: I know hostage situations can be very sensitive. Can you give me an example of how NSOC can be involved in a hostage situation?

Doug Nieman: Absolutely. There's actually a really good example from about a decade ago. A young boy was actually traveling overseas with his parents, who were dual citizens, American citizens. And the boy was playing outside when a car pulled up, and they snatched the boy and spat off. Wow. So his cousins that were playing with him, of course, ran to tell the adults what had happened, and the adults then turned to the U.S. Embassy and asked for help. Of course, the U.S. Embassy operates as part of the State Department. The State Department was then able to reach out to places like NSA and let us know what was happening. And it's really a powerful effort, that sharing of information that shows how we all work together across the government. But what NSOC was able to do is make sure that we pulled together the right experts to actually work this problem in a very timely manner. And they were able to generate intelligence to very quickly identify who the hostage takers were, and maybe more importantly, where they were located. And of course, we passed that information to the local authorities downrange. They were able to launch a recovery operation and rescue the boy unharmed. So it's pretty exciting, really rewarding for us. It's a great example where the things that NSA does are not known by the American public, but they really make a difference. Of course, very rewarding for all the people involved to know that we played a role. That young boy, his family will never know that NSA was part of what enabled him to come home safely that day.

Cam Potts: Wow. Touching story. Yeah, definitely. I mean, it sounds like you're describing the plot of a movie, but it's reality. And what blows me away is how all of this took place. But the moment NSOC got involved, there was some type of resolve to the situation. So it's truly incredible and amazing to the work that NSOC does. And it's a common theme of NSA, which is positioning a partnership when all the right people are in the right places through partnership. There is success and mission. So again, Doug, thanks to you and the wonderful people that work on your team to ensure that those within our nation and our allies are safe and sound.

Doug Nieman: And this all happened within 48 hours from the time that we were notified to the time that young boy was recovered.

Cristy Wicks: Collaboration is key. Really exciting. Absolutely. Definitely.

Cam Potts: And so while we're talking about just ensuring that those within our nation, our allies are safe and sound, and talking about our nation, talking about national security, Yemi, I would love to turn it over to you to talk about national security systems. What are national security systems? How do they work? Give us the ABC123.

Yemi Rotimi So national security systems in a nutshell are systems that provide a critical function as well as any high level operation capabilities to systems or networks and infrastructure across the government. That includes our spaces. I see Department of Defense as well as federal departments and agencies, you know, the ones that we don't necessarily hear too much about or are the ones that most people think about when they think about the government. So these systems are what we provide support to coverage, just understanding the threat landscape and making sure that the environment and the hygiene of these systems are adequate up to par to be on the network. Because at the end of the day, we're only as strong as our weakest link and to ensure that we all kind of have that cohesion across these spaces, provides us a full on defense and depth and defense layer approach and protection.

Cristy Wicks: So it sounds like national security systems can be a lot of things. Can you give us an example about how NSA actually defends them?

Yemi Rotimi: So a good example of that would be, let's say that we just had a situation where one of these mics went down, right? Again, one mic is great, but if we're all trying to squeeze onto one mic, it wouldn't really do us any good. So national security system is like, okay, well, that mic is important in order for everyone to do their job. And in order for that job to be well, all the connections, all of the software and things that need to keep that system up to par or keep that mic up to par need to be handled. Well, this might kind of connects to other systems that allow that to happen. So protecting that system or protecting that mic and providing the adequate updates, software needs and even changes helps that system to help that computer or that microphone as we're talking. That helps that to stay online. And also it does not spread because that's another thing. While this mic definitely does an amazing job, we know that there are duplicates and duplicates require their own support in their own defense too. So that's kind of how national security systems work. They allow us to provide the support and also do the operations and great job that a lot of our employees across the spaces do, but also make sure that their systems are operating at optimal conditions.

Cristy Wicks: So that was a great example on how, you know, the national security systems work. So can you give me a tangible example of how NSA really gets involved in defending them?

Yemi Rotimi: Yes. So using that example, there are situations where if there is a vulnerability or a cybersecurity advisory that has been issued that we've seen in the news or some sort of network event or threat, the way the NSA would work or the way the operations in the world work is we would reach out to our partners across the national security system space to understand the pulse of the actual situation. Consider one that we know that's been in the news a lot of vault typhoon targeting critical infrastructure, energy, things of that nature with a threat like that or in this situation like that, it gives us an opportunity to say, okay, well, what's going on? We'll try one or two of our partners or we would just kind of send out us a broad issuance and blow on blast to everyone. Hey, this is something that we're aware of. This is what is going on. What does it look like in your spaces? What's the pulse or the scope of the potential threat if there is an impact and understanding what we get back. We would digest that type of information, understand, provide that to senior levels to say, okay, do we need to move forward with some sort of overall advisory situational issuance that allows everyone to be on guard like, hey, here's an alert that this may impact the state. You may and possibly could impact your environment, your scope, because not every threat is a threat to everyone. They consider the mic situation, the mic example, one mic might be affected, but that mic may not be connected to the larger system. However, in another environment, that mic may be connected to other mics that could be connected to other systems. And randomly, you may have HR connected to a system in there. So we want to avoid that, but at the same time, continuously working in those off-brand times where there is no threat to understand the scope of everyone's environment to see, is this mic connected to the water facility system? Is this mic connected to HR? While it should not, this allows everyone to really do a deep dive into their environment. So a threat, like we said, with vault typhoon and for targeting critical infrastructure affords us the opportunity to engage with our partners in real time, really get them to do some deep diving and engage with their partners and so forth and so on to understand, hey, we have this system, what's in our, in our woodshed or in our inventory to understand what that threat is active. And if it isn't active, we report that. And if it is, then it gives us an opportunity to engage and really let others know and give them a pulse of the, of the current threat landscape.

Cam Potts: So NSA, we have the defense side, keeping our nation safe 24 seven. And speaking of that, NSOC is a 24 seven office. So how does that work? What does that look like on a daily basis?

Yemi Rotimi: It's a, it's high functioning. It's definitely high paced. And while you see that nucleus or team working maybe day to day, there's also the back end or the folks who while everyone is asleep, while others are handling their operations and duties at given times, we got to have the back of the team, you know, almost like the office aligned to provide that support that really doesn't always get the shine. So you need this broken down into a team effort, you know, there's multiple teams that work over a coverage of time, a coverage of duration and days, because everyone's going to need to arrest at a point. So that 24 seven operation works in that facet to ensure that we have adequate coverage, but also that we are also optimizing the abilities of our workforce so that they're not being overworked, they're not being stressed. And it's kind of that nucleus and that synergy that allows us to do this continuously. So the way the, the cybersecurity operation center works is it uses those type of, you know, resources and utilities, even in some cases where if it needs to be, we expand out to, you know, the entire agency to say, hey, if there needs to be coverage and support, you have that from the back office.

Cristy Wicks: So for someone who hasn't done it, what's it like to work on a watch floor? It sounds like the watch floor is like a constant command post for the national security systems.

Yemi Rotimi: That is correct. You spend a good amount of time doing a lot of collaboration and engagement. At the same time, it is fast paced. It is a high intensity when there is an actual threat or some sort of higher level situation or environment that happens to a system. So once that collaboration begins and we find out and we look to find out as much information detail about the scope, the threat, the potential impact, not just where it's located, but who could also be affected by it. That requires us to engage with cyber com and other liaisons that are represented from, you'd be surprised across the government across not just our spaces and offices, depending on what, you know, regional areas that, you know, could be involved, whether it's internal, it's external, interagency. We use those type of, you know, nuclei and networks to find out what the operation is, find out what the situation is from a tactical as well as a strategic operational response and gathering all of that so that we can provide it to individuals like Doug and others, you know, executives and stakeholders across our spaces, across, you know, the cyber operation landscape, so that they're able to provide real time response, real time updates. Because at the end of the day, that's what we all want to find out what's going on, how it's going on, how are we responding to it? When will that response, you know, be more of a resolve resolution or what are the mitigation steps that can be done? So that's kind of how, you know, a normal day is. Sometimes you may find yourself running from one end of the room to the other. Sometimes you might find yourself on the phone a lot. Others, you're going to be back and forth maybe through email. At the end of the day, it's almost like draft day every single moment. You're on the phone calls, you're there, you're trying to make trades, you're trying to find this information out. It really can kind of get very engaging and you really get to understand what other operations and what other offices are working on as well as build a kind of a relationship that can help in future engagements.

Doug Nieman: And Yemi mentioned it, it really is a family atmosphere. So we ask a lot of our team members, they spend a lot of time together working long shifts in the middle of the night. We ask them to drive into work in the middle of a snowstorm when the rest of us all have the day off. We wouldn't do that if the work that they're doing wasn't important. Every one of them there is the expert in what they

do. We bring all the right people together, we put them in the right room and they really do become a family, you know, like their second family. They build strong bonds and they know how to come together in a crisis and get the job done. It's really impressive to see what they do every day.

Yemi Rotimi: Definitely, you know, a foot stomping that. It's an awesome place to work. It's not too many places that you can work when you feel that your work has fulfillment, that you know there's a purpose to it. You don't really know what you need until it's needed. As Doug just alluded to, the family that was in that hostage situation, you don't realize the type of support and type of backing that you have until it's necessary, but it's great. And to know that you have a part, you play a part into that, but also know that others work in that same space, just in a different level, it's a good, good feeling to know that your work matters and you're doing some good there.

Cam Potts: Absolutely. Certainly. And talking about joining the mission, I actually just started it in a scene recently and I remember when I first started and I would hear about NSOC, I would ask around, "Well, what is NSOC? Who is NSOC? I don't know what NSOC is." And then everything I heard was great. They were great things and I was like, "Okay, you all are hyping it up." But then a few months ago, I got the chance to actually visit the NSOC watch for and it was like, "Oh, okay, you all are right. It's like a movie." So being able to join the mission and potentially at some point in your career, if you're interested, working on the NSOC watch for is definitely an honor and exciting, exciting work.

Doug Nieman: I think one of the most exciting things about it is the things that the teams focus on matter right now. So they're in the middle of things that are happening around the world at the time that they're happening. Sometimes before you see them on the news, they're really in the middle of the important things. There are things that make a difference for our nation. Absolutely. That's exciting to be. Any tour, the amount of time you spend working in one of our operation centers, there will be those moments that you remember where, "Hey, something really significant was happening around the world and NSOC were playing our role to make sure that NSOC could deliver the results that we need for the nation."

Yemi Rotimi: It's always great to be in a role where you can actually help people and you're actually doing that. And then again, you have folks like Doug who you tend to also forget that part until you need it, that you have high level decision makers across that have a nucleus to them and you have individuals who are leading these operations from that strategic level as a focal point. There's not a moment where Doug is never available. It's one thing to say, "I have an open door policy." It's one thing when your whole operations is in an entire open door and he's literally standing there, "Hey, what you need? What do you got? What's going on? Hey, do you need anything?" Even in less high stakes or real time situations, you have individuals who are definitely leading these operations that are always accessible and very helpful. So while we have that family nucleus, everyone can kind of try something different or hop into another area to even just learn from that perspective. So while working on the floor and working in that, you know, the NSS space or the national security system space is great. You still get to work across someone who's from another agency and understand how they view that same threat so that you learn. So you get a good diversity of thought, diversity of engagement, which is always something that you want to build on, you know, because we're not all like minds. You know, as we talk about, but it gives us an opportunity to really kind of sharpen each other and kind of get better when you have experts, they are constantly trying to get better. It's really rewarding.

Cristy Wicks: Absolutely. It sounds rewarding.

Doug Nieman: One of the other things I really like about the Operations Center is because we bring together people from across our agency, we have such a wide variety of professional backgrounds and experiences all represented in one place. We'll have fairly junior folks, we'll have fairly senior folks with a depth of experience that's really, truly impressive. We'll have, of course, civilians, military, members of our contracted team, all coming together in one place to get the job done. So it's exciting to see the kinds of people when you look to your left and your right, you do see people from different backgrounds, you see people that have different skill sets. You know, you might have a technical professional next to an analyst and then, you know, might have a logistics professional. It's really exciting to see all these kinds of people operating together to get the job done.

Cam Potts: Doug, thank you for bringing that up. The wide variety of skills, the backgrounds that these professionals come in and they serve the mission daily. So I wanted to ask both of you, could you respond briefly to just how did you get your start working on a watch floor? Yemi, I'll start with you and then we'll follow up with Doug.

Yemi Rotimi: So I had just completed a tour at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence working as an all source analyst. And that afforded me the opportunity to engage directly with partners across the, you know, the agency space, the interagency as well as private sector on those type of threats as well. So while you also did that, you also kind of engaged also with seniors and those who are, you know, influencing our policies as well. Returning kind of looked to continue that type of effort. And as I was looking and working with my original shop, it gave me an opportunity to kind of learn. And I talked to a mentor who said, hey, you know, try working on the watch floor. It's like, well, I've worked with them before in the past, you know, providing input here, you know, reporting and things of that nature. And I was like, you know what, let me go ahead and give it a shot, see what offices are kind of working in that cybersecurity space to kind of continue what I'm doing. And I was able to get an opportunity there. So it kind of did lead to that engagement there. I wondered if, you know, you have the skills and everything, but again, it's just more so just having the ability and also working in these spaces that we do, whether it's cyber. And that was part of my background. So it gave me an opportunity to kind of just jump into the fold, especially with the mission that kind of focuses on cybersecurity defense. That also kind of led to it there because what we're doing is trying to provide that a level of awareness and level of understanding. And pretty much was a match already, you know, didn't even realize it until you actually are in that another high visibility space to engage and really tap into the skills that you have.

Doug Nieman: And I would say, you know, throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work in a number of operation centers and SOC and others. And all of them have been very exciting places to work. You know, all the things that our agency does are really important. They all matter. But when you think about the functions that require someone to do them around the clock, those really, really matter. We would not ask people to drive in in a snowstorm to report for duty if it wasn't an important function they were going to perform. So anytime that I hear we have a 24 by 7 operation center, you've immediately got my attention. And I want to know more about what are the functions that that team is doing? They must be so important or we just wouldn't do it in that way. We would do them normal Monday through Friday business. So it really is the kind of environment that people like to work in. It's always exciting. Some days may be slow. Maybe things are calm around the world. But because we have a worldwide mission, there are always things happening all around the world. And in many cases, many things. One of the things I didn't mention is NSOC actually has a special room that we call the Battle Bridge, where in addition to having the team on duty around the clock, we can actually respond to a



specific situation that is developed and actually pull together and build a dedicated team to operate from our Battle Bridge to focus on just that one crisis event. So it's a great way to augment the support that NSOC and others already provide. And it's a way to ensure we have exactly the right people positioned in place to work a specific crisis situation.

Cam Potts: I was going to actually ask, I know you talk about the 24-7 shift in the daily work that those that work in NSOC does. It's a family atmosphere. Could you share one of your favorite moments, like something that may have happened while you were working on the floor?

Yemi Rotimi: So this one actually occurred almost a year to this point because I had just returned from leave. And you just try to get your bearings, find out what's the latest activity going on, and you jump right into an actual cyber situation. And while that is actually going and you're like, "Okay, well, I'm just returning." You got a dozen emails or 100,000 emails to look through. You're like, "All right, what's the quickest one?" And while I'm doing that and actually engaging with one of our CyberCom partners, DIRNSA walks in. And you're thinking, "What's the time?" You're thinking, and you're engaging at this moment with the person, still kind of throwing a little laughs because you just returned, but at the same time trying to find out what the threat is. But you're just kind of waiting for data, like we said. You're engaging and kind of waiting on the phone. So you just kind of get this casual person comes up and just says, "Hey, what's going on, guys? What's the latest?" And before you look around, normally the time you expect an entourage to kind of come in, you know, like you see a celebrity, they kind of have their team there. No, no team. He's just always active and he's always on the street and he's like there. So you're kind of stuttering, fumbling, you know, stuttering Stanley a little bit to let him know what's going on. But then it's still processing your head, like, "Whoa, you're talking to DIRNSA. Can you actually just give him a casual line like that?" So he's just, you know, patting you on the back and he's like, "Oh, great job. Okay, I've heard about that. Thanks for the information." And he just walks over to talk to, you know, the battle captain or he's headed back up to his office. He spends a lot of time, you know, going back and forth from them spaces and he can pop in at any moment. But the fact that you're kind of dealing with a threat, but then you also have the big boss coming down to find out just a casual conversation and engaging on that threat while you hear phones calls ringing, people kind of standing around, kind of waiting to get information. It's just, you know, constant moving, constant, like you said, fast paced. And it kind of leaves you kind of processing and wondering if you're going to be on your toes, not just for the rest of the day, but even just to find that information. But it's kind of like I said, it's cool. It's a high level environment that gives you the opportunity to see how we operate in times of crisis. But then also just when, you know, there's a quick turnaround to provide that level of awareness and insight to our seniors real time so that they're able to update. You really get to see the level of our mission operate from, you know, different areas as well as, like you said, that collaboration part of it. So that's probably one of my fondest ones and it still pops up. You kind of get all jittery as some of the kind of, you know, you're mentioning it because it's still the, you know, the aspect of dealing with him.

Cam Potts: So, Yemi you had to have been nervous because I know I would have been.

Yemi Rotimi: Definitely. I mean, trying not to let the sweat fall but still respond was definitely a highlight for me.

Cam Potts: Yes, certainly. Now, Doug, what is one of your favorite moments working on the watch floor?

Doug Nieman: Yeah, so the one that comes to mind for me was really early in my career, was actually all the way back in 1990. I had a chance to work briefly on the NSOC floor and I would remember it was a midnight shift and I was on watch and it was the night that Iraq invaded Kuwait. Which of course led to Desert Storm and the U.S. response to that. Wow. And I'll never forget because I saw the NSOC team spring into action. I saw them do all the things that they do and I was really amazed how everyone on the team did their role. So, they all knew what their job was. They all knew not only how to do their job but how to function as a cohesive team to come together as a group and ensure that the agency was responding very quickly to that developing situation. So, for me as a very junior individual, kind of looking around, taking it all in, I was kind of hooked from that early stage in my career just to see, these are some amazing professionals doing great work, again, that really matters for our nation. And I was hooked. So, that draw to work in operation centers is something that has stayed with me throughout my career. So, the chance to come back to NSOC as the director, of course, quite an honor, very exciting and I continue to be amazed every day just to see what those team members are able to do and wonder what is the next crisis going to be. Obviously, there are a lot that we are dealing with today, but we don't know what's around the corner, but I do know that our team will be ready to respond.

Cam Potts: Yes, well, Doug, Yemi, thank you so much for just the work that you do. It's truly commendable. And of course, thank you again for joining us today to talk all things NSOC, the heartbeat of NSA. Our pleasure. All right. For our listeners, as a reminder, if you would like to join our national security mission here at NSA, please head over to [NSA.gov slash careers](https://www.nsa.gov/careers). As always, it's been a pleasure being one of your hosts. I'm Cam Potts alongside my wonderful co-host. And Christy Wicks. Yes. And until next time, this has been No Such Podcast.