



# BTAC BULLETIN

EMERGING ISSUES, TRENDS, CAPABILITIES, AND BEST PRACTICES IN INSIDER THREAT ANALYSIS

## dis·grun·tle·ment



**In the past 25 years alone, there are numerous examples of disgruntlement which led to a concerning grievance followed by an insider's actions which damaged national security, or harmed people. Some examples include:**

Modest disgruntlement can be a common human condition. Whether it's how we feel we're treated by our bosses and organization, resentment about that promotion we thought we deserved, or our disagreement with a particular policy of the US government, sometimes we all can feel dissatisfied in the workplace. While some disgruntlement is normal, if it leads to a grievance, especially if accompanied by a "call to action," it could be a potential risk indicator for insider threats like espionage, unauthorized disclosures, or targeted violence.

### When Disgruntlement is Unhealthy

Some indicators include:

- Increased or excessive inflammatory comments or positions against organizational policies or leadership in the workplace
- Lingering, unresolved resentment against co-workers, supervisors, or organization
- Small security incidents or low-level insubordination
- Decline in performance – quality of work, enthusiasm, etc.
- Withdrawal – A noticeable change in participation
- Small/incremental accumulations of risk over time

#### What can leaders do?:

- Leaders, organizations, and insider threat programs should strive to identify and mitigate disgruntlement before it leads to an action which damages our national security or causes physical harm to our co-workers.
- A leader can minimize employee disgruntlement by being aware of their direct and indirect impacts on the organization's culture. This creates a foundation of trust and opens communication to address potential issues early.
- By "seeing something, saying something" and leaders "doing something" we can, together, play a role in mitigating the risk that discontentment becomes a disproportionate or fixated grievance.
- Leaders should promote a culture that values transparency, honesty, empowerment in decision making, and clear pathways for growth/development.
- No organization is perfect or immune, but communication and transparency are hallmarks of a good organization with less disgruntlement. Focus on transparency and consistency of processes rather than outcomes since outcomes are often unpredictable and out of a supervisor's control.
- Leaders should consult Human Resources, Ombudsman, EEO, and other organizational partners for support in managing workplace conflict and facilitating difficult conversations with employees.
- Unhealthy disgruntlement (especially when combined with a maladaptive organizational response) can be a significant stressor that can lead an insider down the critical pathway. (Reference: Shaw, E. D., & Sellers, L. (2015). Application of the Critical-Path Method to evaluate insider risk. *Studies in Intelligence*, 59, 1–8)



#### Ana Montes

**Espionage against the US for Cuba based on her disagreement with US policy vis a vis Nicaragua.**



#### Edward Snowden

**Unauthorized disclosure to the media due to his belief a US surveillance program was illegal.**



#### Daniel Hale

**Personal dispute with the US' drone warfare program that led to his unauthorized disclosure known as the "Drone Papers".**