



## The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises

### Role konkurenčnej inteligencie v zabezpečení ekonomickej bezpečnosti podnikov

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#### Abstract:

*The article is devoted to the issues of commercial intelligence and, related to this, the security of the enterprise. The article describes the nature, tasks, approaches to the definition of principles and the selection of effective methods of organizing competitive intelligence and counterintelligence enterprises. Some adapted methods of analytical and research work are covered. Some issues of professional training for competitive intelligence and counterintelligence are described.*

**Key words:** *intelligence, commercial secrets, information, economic security, enterprises*

#### Abstrakt:

*Článok je venovaný business inteligencii a to v súvislosti s podnikovou bezpečnosťou. Článok opisuje povahu, úlohy, prístupy k definovaniu princípov a výber efektívnych metód organizovania konkurenčnej inteligencie a counterinteligencie v podnikoch. Uvažuje sa o niektorých metódach analytickej a výskumnej práce konkurenčnej inteligencie. Článok opisuje niektoré otázky odbornej prípravy špecialistov konkurenčnej inteligencie a counterinteligencie.*



# **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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**Kľúčové slová:** *inteligencia, obchodné tajomstvá, informácie, podniková bezpečnosť, podnik.*

## **INTRODUCTION. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM**

Even in ancient times, intelligence for politics, diplomacy and commerce was understandable. Cities, where commercial secrets valued above military or political, became centers of commercial intelligence. Subsequently, the experience of conducting intelligence at the state level began to be used at the level of the then entrepreneurship - artisans, merchants, and bankers. According to foreign and domestic practices, the value of intelligence, commercial secrets and information in general has increased in recent times. Information is one of the most valuable resources available in the organization, which seeks not to lose its competitiveness on the world market. Competitive struggle is impossible without obtaining information, in connection with Western firms spend 15-20% of net profit for counter-espionage. Intelligence information differs from the usual one in that it is a target. This is not information at all, but information that serves as a sufficient basis for a completely specific decision. [7]

## **ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS**

Domestic scientists have dedicated their works to these issues, such as: V. V. Krutov [12], M. S. Lysenko [14], T. Tkachuk [20], V. I. Franchuk [21] and other. The problem of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence was carried out by the scientists of the near abroad: Yu. N. Adashkevich [1], N. I. Borisov [3], L. S. Budovich [4], A. N. Bistrova [5], A. Vays [6], Yu. P. Voronov [7], V. A. Dyemin [8], A. O. Yehorenko [19], V. P. Mak-Mak [15], Serhiy Mirkin [16], A. A. Mitrofanov [17], V. D. Provotorov [18], Yu. A. Romanova [19], Yu. S. Sakhno [5], E. Yushchuk [22-23]. Experts in the field of business and corporate intelligence Belkin Maykl [2], H. Lemke and other have made a significant contribution to rethinking the conceptual and scientific-practical approaches.

## **UNSOLVED EARLIER PART OF THE GENERAL PROBLEM**

To date, issues of essence, tasks, approaches to the definition of principles and the selection of effective methods for the organization of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence by domestic business entities remain unclear. Not developed, taking into account examples of successful practice, adapted methods of analytical and research work. In today's situation, outstanding issues remain regarding the interconnection and interaction of specialists in the services of economic security and competitive intelligence.

## **FORMULATING OF GOALS OF THE ARTICLE**

The purpose of the article is to carry out an analysis of the current state of understanding of the place and role of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence (analytical and search activity) in the interests of domestic business entities, and to determine the specifics of the professional training of specialists for the successful implementation of this activity.

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

---

### **PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL**

For the definition of intelligence at the enterprise level, the aforementioned authors use different terms, including work intelligence, business intelligence, commercial intelligence, economic intelligence, marketing intelligence, industrial intelligence, analytical intelligence, etc. But the generally accepted notion of these types of intelligence has long been not formulated either by foreign or domestic scientists and experts. According to Henrikh Lemke, an independent expert in the field of competitive intelligence, «Competitive (commercial, business) intelligence is an ongoing (within the existing legal framework and in compliance with ethical standards) collection and processing of data from various sources for the development of managerial decisions to enhance competitiveness of commercial organization [13]. The position of Henrikh Lemke is to clearly divide the functions of the competitive intelligence and security services of the enterprise. In his opinion, the functions of competitive intelligence should include, first of all, the following: studying the activities of competitors and the competitive environment; verification of reliability of business partners; collection of topical information on the Internet and monitoring of mass media; research and market evaluation; forecasting changes in the market situation and actions of competitors; Identification of new and potential competitors; assisting management in the process of borrowing and implementing the positive experience and successful practices of other companies; Assistance to specialists from other departments in assessing the prospects of acquiring or opening a new business; obtaining information lawfully and analyzing new technologies, products or processes that can have a significant impact on a business company; identify weaknesses of competitors, etc. [13]. Independent expert on business intelligence D. Zolotukhin believes that the essence of competitive intelligence is to collect and analyze information that is useful for company's business. The strategic purpose of competitive intelligence is to maintain consistent compliance with the company's strategy for the time being, with the actions it implements [14]. According to Y. Adashkevich, competitive intelligence is the most important tool for minimizing risks and providing income, as well as being an «early warning system» not only for intentions of competitors, but also possible scenarios for changes in the markets. This system is able to inform about the emergence of hazards and the emergence of threats, to form ways to reduce business risks, to develop optimal managerial decisions [1]. Serhiy Mirkin adheres to the same opinion. He believes that the main objectives of competitive intelligence include the following: continuous monitoring and collecting open information about the competitive environment; analytical processing of the received data from different sources; presentation of results of top management of the company, for making management decisions; storage and dissemination of results [16].

M. Lysenko under the term «competitive intelligence» understands the collection and analytical processing of information necessary for the company to compete in the markets [14]. The Organization of Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP) offers the most detailed definition of competitive intelligence as a set of planned actions by the company for the systematic and ethical collection, analysis and management of that information about the external environment, which may affect the implementation of enterprise plans and their work in general [6].

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

---

According to A. Bistrova and YU. Sakhno, competitive intelligence is an instrument for studying the competitive environment through the targeted gathering of information about competitors for making managerial decisions that relate to strategy and tactics of doing business [5]. Most scientists consider the main objectives of competitive intelligence to accumulate and synthesize information through the compilation and presentation of managerial reporting for the development of appropriate managerial decisions; identifying opportunities for the development and introduction of new activities, or expansion of markets; the establishment of strategic goals and objectives to ensure maximum efficiency of the economic entity [1-9, 12-18, 20-23].

Competitive intelligence, in terms of YU. Romanova and A. Yehorenko, is aimed at the study of macro- and micro-phenomena and the company's immediate surroundings through the prism of competition. The main focus of this activity is the research of competitors in relation to the macro-organization of the organization [19]. Researchers consider competitive intelligence as a marketing tool for research a competitive environment, and believes that identifying goals and constituent strategies of competitors allows companies to gain significant competitive advantage.

Among domestic scientists, the issue of competitive intelligence paid much attention researcher V. Franchuk [21]. He rightly noted that this activity is determined by scientists and practitioners rather ambiguous. There are the most widespread synonymous names: competitive intelligence, business intelligence, economic intelligence, commercial (business) intelligence. Competitive intelligence is understood as a marketing tool for studying a competitive environment, which is a collection of purposeful gathering of information about competitors for making managerial decisions regarding further strategy and tactics of doing business; planned actions of the company regarding the systematic and ethical collection, analysis and management of the information about the external environment, which may affect the implementation of the plans of the enterprise and its work in general; collection and processing of data from various sources for the development of management decisions in order to increase the competitiveness of a commercial organization, conducted in the following: law and compliance with ethical standards [7]. Business (work) intelligence is perceived as a permanent process of collecting, processing, evaluating and accumulating data, analyzing them for the purpose of making optimal decisions [8]. Economic intelligence is defined as a set of agreed upon places, times and means of measures of special state or corporate bodies and actions of the prepared units and / or persons aimed at obtaining closed or open information, as well as their collection, analysis, interpretation in order to obtain information that is important for economic actors and provides either national or corporate competitive advantages; or as an organizational structure dealing with the collection, verification, processing and analysis of data from various aspects of the foreign economic activity of the enterprise, further using the received information to solve specific tasks of its economic activity [18]. Commercial intelligence is the most important function of strategic management of the company, aimed at ensuring the effective achievement of predetermined strategic business objectives [13].

Scientists T. Tkachuk [18] and A. Mitrofanov [17] emphasize that intelligence is defined as a function as a system; as a structure and as a type of activity. In the interpretation of their essence and content there are also differences, sometimes

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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significant. However, the authors agree that competitive intelligence is carried out in the organization's external environment in order to obtain the information necessary for decision making that will allow the entity to operate effectively, develop and adapt to changes in this environment, avoiding the risks and threats that can influence the achievement of strategic business goals. In contrast to the above-mentioned approach to enterprise intelligence, there is another, in which intelligence activities are proposed to be carried out not only in the external environment, but also in the internal [21].

Considering the reconnaissance activities of enterprises, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that in the professional literature and in practice the term «industrial espionage» is also used. However, these concepts should be distinguished. Characteristic features for intelligence are compliance with ethical norms and activities within the law. The content of the work of a specialist who is engaged in intelligence, is information and analytical work, that is the collection and analysis of information from open sources by methods that do not violate the rules of law.

Industrial espionage is understood as the kind of unfair competition, the activities of the illegal extraction and prosecution of information constituting industrial and business secrets of competitors, their commercial secrets, from sources that are closed from wide access (and third parties) in order to achieve economic benefits. For industrial espionage, for the most part, there is an illegal activity using inventive and technical methods. For example, penetration into the rival's territory, theft of information, bribery of employees, the removal of information from communication channels, blackmail, etc. [20].

As you know, a part of the scientists and practitioners involved in the research or practical provision of economic security of enterprises argue that the determining part of the intelligence activity is analytical. In other words, modern threats and dangerous tendencies for the development of business entities and entrepreneurship in general are more efficient and economically cheaper to be discovered using open sources and modern methods of analysis. Therefore, in their opinion, at the level of the entity it is expedient to use the term «analytical and search activity», since it most reflects the essential nature of modern intelligence in the economy as a specific function of economic security of enterprises [20-21].

According to V. Franchuk, analytical-search activity is an informational and analytical activity aimed at identifying threats of internal and external origin to strategic goals, as well as trends in the development of the market, economy, competition, etc., which may become obstacles or create conditions for their achievement, using legal sources of information and methods for collecting it [21].

By systematizing the results of the studies L. Budovich [4], T. Tkachuk [20] and V. Franchuk [21], we will formulate the basic principles, tasks and stages of analytical search activity. Therefore, its task is to provide information to senior management of the company in advance about the negative trends that are developing in the internal and external environment of the organization in terms of achieving strategic goals of development; early provision of information to management about the opportunities that are available on the market; early disclosure of competitors' plans to achieve by them competitive advantages, seizing leadership, or implementing other dangerous actions for development [7]. The basic principles of this activity should include:

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

---

confidentiality, legality; activity; purposefulness; objectivity; complexity; systematic; continuity [8]. The basic stages of this activity are: identification of information needs of managers who deal with strategic management issues; collection of information; processing and analysis of information; registration and providing information [18].

Thus, on the basis of the analysis of the research of scientists, one can conclude that according to its tasks, information-analytical and counter-intelligence activities are practically similar, that is, scientists in these activities invest the same content, using different names [4, 21].

This position deserves attention, but only in relation to counterintelligence, aimed at internal threats. Therefore, it is not clear what place in this process is the competitive intelligence aimed at external threats, as in an independent, though related counter-intelligence type of activity on competitors: their business, financial capabilities, competitiveness, plans, prospects, and the effectiveness of its intelligence and counterintelligence. In the process of conducting competitive intelligence there is also information and analytical work. It is no coincidence that A. Doronin speaks of intelligence and counterintelligence support of financial and economic activity [9]. His approach seems to be the most argumentative.

On the other hand, V. Franchuk convincingly argues that the security of corporate culture, which is based on knowledge of managers and experts in the theory and practice of economic security, has a significant influence on the state of economic security of enterprises and on the efficiency of its system. Such knowledge, as shown by the analysis of literary sources and experience of higher education institutions in Ukraine and other countries, can be obtained in the process of learning or in the conducting of special research [21]. The training of specialists in economic security should be purposeful and scientifically sound and implemented on a systematic basis. For this purpose, he proposed a model for training security specialists in Ukraine, using conceptual approaches: within the framework of specialization; within the specialty; within the framework of the scientific specialty [21]. Of course, this also applies to specialists in competitive intelligence, or in the terminology of A Doronin [9], «intelligence and counterintelligence provision of financial and economic activity», and according to the formulated definition of V. Franchuk [21] – «analytical-search activity».

It is known that the training of this category of specialists has certain features and requires specific, somewhat specific knowledge, skills and abilities. That is, the corresponding competence in modern educational terminology. V. Franchuk also mentioned this problem in general terms: «The environment in which it is necessary to work as a security manager is variable and difficult to evaluate and make decisions, depending on the situation and the task that is being performed, to be a psychologist, a teacher, an analyst, «operativist», guardian, etc. Along with this, the activity of the security manager is characterized by conspiracy, playing the role of various social and professional types, etc. [21]. But it is not clear what is implied in the concept of «operativist». Indeed, it is precisely for the experts in the field of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence that «efficiency» is extremely necessary. At the same time, their patriotic and professional-corporate education is an integral part of the professional training of personnel for carrying out the said activity. The aforementioned scientists did not pay enough attention to this issue.

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyly ZAPLATYNSKYI

---

If we consider the second part of the goal - the specifics of professional training for competitive intelligence and counterintelligence (analytical search activities) in the interests of economic security of economic entities - then first you should focus on the need to ensure receive knowledge by them, skills and abilities, in relation to methods, techniques and tools (mechanisms) of timely acquisitions (within the limits of the current legislation) of objective and useful information. In its turn, it would allow to make informed decisions on the elimination of external or internal threats, expansion of opportunities and prospects of enterprise development, etc. But before giving future specialists the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the above-mentioned methods, techniques and tools (mechanisms) of such activity, efforts need to be made to clearly understand and assimilate the essence of corporate intelligence and counterintelligence. By accumulating the already mentioned definitions of this problem by a number of scientists, the author considers it appropriate to express his own vision of this issue.

First of all, it should be emphasized that corporate intelligence is a purposeful study with the help of appropriate mechanisms of the external competitive environment of objects of interest: the state of business, financial capabilities, competitiveness, plans for the future, real prospects, direction and efficiency of their competitive intelligence and counter-intelligence for analyzing and making managerial decisions on further strategy and tactics of doing business, as well as improving its system of protection. The main characteristic of competitive intelligence is the direction of its activity in identifying and stopping external threats of illegal nature.

Equally responsible efforts should be made to arguably expose and disclose by future specialists the essence of competitive counter-intelligence. If we proceed from the theory of counterintelligence as such, then this is an agency, an organization that has the task of counteracting the enemy's intelligence, fighting espionage and sabotage.

The object of competitive counter-intelligence activity is the internal environment of business entities. Before counterintelligence, the following main tasks are faced:

- collection and systematization of information that characterizes the level of enterprise security;
- detection, prevention, termination of infiltration attempts and recruitment of agents by competitors, partners and criminal structures;
- prevention of the leakage of confidential information about the activities of the company by its employees, partners and clients;
- checking the reliability and other qualities relevant for business protection, and aspects of the person's employment during recruitment, as well as from time to time employees of the enterprise;
- prejudice and investigation of detected facts of industrial espionage, timely detection and effective counteraction to possible raider attacks by intruders and competitors;
- operational cover for personnel, buildings, and facilities of the enterprise;
- prevention of occurrence of negative processes in the team, detection and elimination of their causes [15].

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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In this context, it raises the question of the expediency of merging already conceived in the content of domestic and foreign practices such as corporate intelligence and corporate counterintelligence with the term «analytical and search activity». However, the term offered by V. Franchuk can be used as a synonymous variant.

According to V. Krutov, detective agencies can be engaged on a contractual basis by issues of intelligence and counterintelligence support of financial and economic activity of enterprises, that is, to perform the functions of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence [12]. In the author's opinion, this is permissible, but on condition that it concerns the economic security of economic entities, criminal offenses in this area, and not searches, for example, missing animals, apartment thefts, finding out the reasons for family conflicts, etc. This is the field of activity of the search links. An important part of the process of obtaining (gathering) information is the methods, techniques, tools used for this purpose. The researcher T. Tkachuk rightly notes: «In practice, such methods, as well as means, are quite numerous». Conditionally, they can be divided into two groups [20]:

- 1) completely legal (white), for example, studying and analyzing publications of a competitor, monitoring of market parameters, purchasing competitors' products;
- 2) methods that in their form do not violate the norms of the laws, but do not always correspond to the ethical standards of fair competition (gray methods), such as: the material incentive of the competitor's employees or the holding of negotiating negotiations in order to find out confidential information.

In general, from scientific publications and practices, the most famous are the following types of methods:

- search and use of sources of information, both human and technical;
- hidden observation;
- an open and encrypted survey;
- inquiry;
- studying available items and documents;
- external and internal review of available buildings, premises and other facilities [20].

Timely, non-standard, effective and efficient use in the complex of these mechanisms is precisely the above-mentioned «efficiency». It should be noted that many scientists - lawyers believe that the use of these mechanisms is a violation of human rights and is contrary to current legislation. But as a counterargument, numerous examples of successful journalistic investigations of corruption schemes and other resonant crimes can be cited due to the use of such mechanisms within the framework of the current legislation.

It should be added that Article 25 (paragraph 3) of the Law of Ukraine «About information» dated 2.10.1992 states: «A journalist has the right not to disclose a source of information or information that allows the establishment of sources of information, except for cases when it is obliged to this decision by the court on the

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

---

basis of the law» [10]. Consequently, there are reasons to believe that the law allows journalists to use confidential sources of information. It turns out that the use of corporate intelligence and counterintelligence of the above methods and tools to counteract criminal, illegal actions of competitors will be legitimate.

A prominent place in the process of training personnel for competitive intelligence and counterintelligence should take the illumination of psychological methods in the process of obtaining information, namely: the definition of information sources and establishing contacts with them, consolidation and development of contact with the object of interest, effective methods of intelligence, methods detection of deception, mechanisms of safe out of contact. It is also important to teach future professionals creative thinking and combine use of the whole set of «tools» for the acquisition and implementation of information.

Processing and analysis of information is one of the important stages of the corporate intelligence and counterintelligence activity, which is carried out by the appropriate methods. Among the most commonly used are: chronological analysis, statistical analysis, comparative analysis, logical analysis of cause and effect relationships of events and processes, analysis of projects, methods of modeling processes and situations, methods for assessing the level of economic security [20-21]. The best set of methods is the one that provides the authenticity and completeness of the information. The main purpose of the analysis is to create an integrated and analytical picture from various sources, data, as well as often unrelated events and facts about the potential or actual threats to the enterprise or opportunities that are open on the market [21]. Certainly, the knowledge of the specialists of these methods, the ability to create these integrated analytical pictures will allow them to receive objective information about the state and level of economic security of the enterprise, the intentions of competitors, the main trends in business development, etc.

It is well-known that higher education institutions in Ukraine need to significantly intensify the patriotic education of applicants. Particular attention should be paid to the responsibility of those institutions of higher education that train specialists for the structures for protecting the economic security of the state, business entities, detective and security agencies. The fact is that the applicants of such institutions of higher education receive knowledge about non-standard forms, methods, means (mechanisms) of activity aimed at liquidation (within the limits of the current legislation) of external and internal threats to the economic interests of the state, economic entities, as well as the protection of legal rights and freedoms of citizens. In other words, they should become competent specialists in the technology of fighting in cooperation with law enforcement agencies with criminal, illegal manifestations in the field of economics and protecting citizens from such attacks. These knowledge, skills and abilities must be gained by people, from the point of view of moral qualities and political preferences. A high level of ideological hardening can provide this reliability.

Separately, we need to say about professional-corporate education, namely:

- formation of a person's sense of great social significance of this profession, respect and love for it;

## **The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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- awareness of its high calling to fight against attacks on the economic interests of the state and enterprises, often in extreme situations and by non-standard methods;
- deep respect for the best traditions of domestic and foreign specialists;
- the readiness, in case of necessity, to protect state interests, business entities, legal rights of citizens;
- moral education is required, aimed at understanding by each person of high calling and duty, professionalism and dedication, dignity and honor, spirituality and decency.

Legal education is important in order to form future specialists in corporate intelligence and counterintelligence of high sense of justice, respect to the Constitution and laws of Ukraine. It will not be superfluous to study foreign experience (USA, England, Germany) on this issue.

### **Conclusions**

Summarizing the foregoing, there are grounds to note the following. Competitive (commercial, business, analytical) intelligence is the collection and processing of data from different sources for the development of managerial decisions using lawful methods. The functions of competitive intelligence are as follows: studying the activities of competitors and the competitive environment; verification of reliability of business partners; collection of topical information in the Internet and monitoring of mass media; research and market evaluation; forecasting changes in the market situation and actions of competitors; identification of new and potential competitors; assisting management in the process of borrowing and implementing the positive experience and successful practices of other companies; assistance to specialists from other departments in assessing the prospects of acquiring or opening a new business; obtaining information lawfully and analysis of new technologies, products or processes that can have a significant impact on a business company; identify weaknesses of competitors, etc. Professional training of personnel for the conduct of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence in the interests of economic security of the state and economic entities should be directed to the deep absorption of the theory and practice of this problem, operational psychology, criminalistics, criminal law and process, educational and methodological materials for the training of specialists of the aforementioned direction. It is urgent to develop the concept of patriotic and professional-corporate training of experts in the field of competitive intelligence and counterintelligence, detective and security activities, as well as the implementation of this concept in the life of interested scientists.

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**The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring  
the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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**The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring  
the economic security of enterprises**

Volodymyr SIDAK, Alexander ZAKHAROV, Vasyl ZAPLATYNSKYI

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**The role of competitive intelligence in ensuring  
the economic security of enterprises**

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