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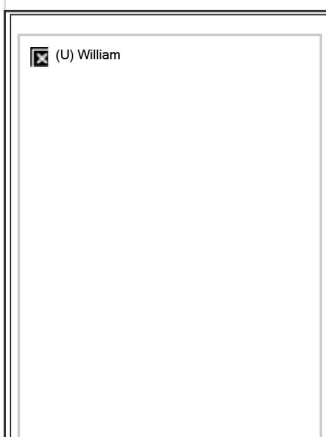
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(U) "Unbroken Cover Name Number 6" - cryptanalysis from VENONA



(U) The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), CIA's predecessor, was created during WWII and was focused on our enemies at that time: Germany, Japan, and Italy. Allies, of course, were not a concern -- although that would change for one of them.

(U) Heading the organization was William "Wild Bill" Donovan, pictured, who had earned the nickname as a college football player, but lived up to the moniker in both world wars.



(U) (Historical photo.) During World War II, William "Wild Bill" Donovan led the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), CIA's predecessor.

(U) The OSS hired widely among professors and adventurers, including many expatriates from countries occupied by the Axis powers. Donovan was criticized for his hiring policy, but is reputed to have said that in espionage, "if you're afraid of wolves, stay out of the forest."

(U) He does not appear to have been deeply concerned about communists and pro-Soviet personnel in OSS ranks during the war; Donovan once remarked, "I'd put Stalin on the payroll if I thought it would help us defeat Hitler." Although a government task force authorized firing communists from government positions in 1942, how much this was followed up in the OSS or elsewhere is questionable.

(U) But, especially with the help of VENONA, as it became clear the Soviet Union was as much enemy as ally, that changed.

(U) VENONA is the name for a program to examine what were originally believed to be Soviet diplomatic messages, but turned out to include traffic from Soviet spy agencies, including the KGB under its various names over the years.

(U) It is very important to note that the cryptanalysis of the VENONA messages occurred after the war. Neither Donovan nor any other OSS personnel had the inside look at KGB operations that VENONA afforded.

(U) VENONA showed that quite a few Soviet spies infiltrated the OSS. None of those identified were able to infiltrate the CIA later, with most losing their clearances and jobs after the war. Quite a few have been identified, generally thanks to VENONA: Franz Neumann, Linn Farish, John Scott, and Duncan Lee, among others.

(U) But not all.

(U) Of the examples given, Neumann (cover name "Ruff") joined the OSS German section in 1942. Farish ("Attila") was an OSS liaison to Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia; he died in a 1944 plane crash. Scott ("Ivanov") worked in the OSS Russian section. Lee ("Koch"), probably the best known, was an assistant to OSS head William Donovan, and, later, a field officer in China.

(U) But we don't know who "unbroken cover name number 6" was.

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(U) VENONA messages were first encoded from a codebook, then superenciphered with what should have been one-time pads. Probably due to the pressures of war, the Soviets accidentally duplicated some one-time pad material, enabling, in one of the great feats of cryptanalysis, U.S. analysts to break some 3,000 messages sent between 1940 and 1948.

(U) Some code groups remained a mystery, however, and this is the case with "unbroken cover name number 6." VENONA analysts could recognize a code group from the codebook, and give it that designation, but they lacked enough context to identify the Russian word it represented.

(U) "Unbroken cover name number 6" appeared in only one message [Venona 884](#), from the KGB station in New York to Moscow on June 8, 1943. Reissued in 1970, the decrypt makes clear that "unbroken cover name number 6" was a married man in an OSS team in Algiers around June 1943.

(U) What he was doing there, what he did before, what he did afterward, and what he passed to the Soviets were never in any of the VENONA traffic that analysts were able to break.

(U) The VENONA team was in fact able to decrypt only a fraction of several years' of traffic, principally messages exchanged between Moscow and some KGB posts in the United States. The true magnitude of Soviet successes against the U.S., including the OSS, can only be guessed at.

(U) Thus, it is still unknown who and what "unbroken cover name number 6" was, and it will likely remain so until the day, should it come, when the KGB archives of that era are opened to the world.

(U) SOURCES:

* John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, 1999, 104-8, 192-5.

* Haynes, Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev, *Spies*, 2009, 329.

(U) Learn more about [VENONA in this Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series article](#) or review more [VENONA documents here](#).

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