

~~UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

DAILY ENTERPRISE



(U) HISTORY TODAY - January 19, 2016

FROM: CCH

Run Date(s): 01/19/2016

(U) Recovering cipher numbers in the French code during the Peninsular War



(U) During the Peninsular Campaign against Napoleon's forces occupying Spain, the Duke of Wellington had an aide, Major George Scovell, who worked on breaking the ciphers used in documents captured from the French.

(U) In June 1812, frustrated by Scovell's slow progress, the Duke of Wellington, pictured here, sent material to the Deciphering Branch of the Secret Office of the Post Office. At that time, Scovell had recovered 450 out of 1,400 cipher numbers in the code used by the French armies in Spain.

(U) The Duke of Wellington got a reply in June of 1813: 164 more recoveries, and a note saying that "with the few cyphers and consequently the slender materials which the decypherer [sic] had to work upon, it was scarcely possible to render this key more complete."

(U) Scovell had recovered almost all of the cipher numbers by that point, so Wellington sent a rude reply back to the Deciphering Branch.

(U) When the Duke of Wellington made his request for assistance, there were fewer than five people working in the Deciphering Branch and their primary task was deciphering intercepted diplomatic correspondence.



(U) The Duke of Wellington (circa early 1800s)

(U) Despite his anger in 1813, when mail interception became a public scandal in 1844, Wellington, the government's leader in the House of Lords and minister without portfolio in the Cabinet, vigorously defended the Post Office.

(U) Read [this earlier History Today article from July 24, 2008](#) about George Scovell.

(U) To discuss historical topics with interesting folks, visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) Have a question or comment on *History Today*? Contact us at: [DL cch](#) or

Information Owner:
 Page Publisher:
 Last Modified: January 14, 2016
 Last Reviewed: January 14, 2016

~~DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 20160110, DECLASSIFY ON: 20430110~~
~~UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

Approved for Release by NSA on 04-12-2019, FOIA Case # 84783

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36