DOCID: 3575725

Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

The Creation of NSA - Part 1 of 3: JOP

(U) In the five years after World War II, three separate internecine struggles occurred in connection with intelligence. One struggle concerned the role of departmental intelligence in the armed services. The second revolved around the proposal to establish a Central Intelligence Agency. Finally, there was a struggle to define and shape the organization for communications intelligence (COMINT) and to control COMINT assets.

(U) Although COMINT was a crucial resource that had proved itself during World War II, in the postwar period it was caught between two conflicting forces:

- The Truman administration was strongly committed to reducing military budgets, personnel and resources.
- The military and political leaders of World War II who had used COMINT understood its value and were determined to both preserve it and control it in the postwar era.

(U) At the end of the Second World War, the U.S. possessed two military agencies for producing communications intelligence and maintaining communications secu-rity (COMSEC). In the Army, COMINT was pro-duced by the Signal Security Agency (SSA), soon to be renamed the Army Security Agency (ASA), headquartered at Arlington Hall Station in Virginia, not far from the Pentagon.

(U) The Navy's COMINT organization was the Communications Intelligence Organization (OP-20-G), located at the former Mount Vernon Seminary on Nebraska Avenue in the District of Columbia. In 1946 this organization was redesignated the Communications Supplementary Activ-ity, Washington, or CSAW.

(U) (In addition, in 1947 the Air Force emerged as a separate service, with its own COMINT organization. This complicated an already complex organizational situation and added to bud-get difficulties. But this is getting ahead of the story.)

(U) Interservice collaboration in the latter part of the war began with an agreement in February 1944 to exchange information and send liaison officers from each COMINT organization to the other. This was followed in April by a coordinating committee, a purely unofficial working-level group in which the rule of decision by unanimity applied to all

formal actions.

(U) Continuing postwar, the Coordinating Committee recognized the expense of separate operations, and perceived that an unpalatable form of centralization could be forced on the services. Therefore, shortly after the end of the war, it established a subcommit-tee on merger planning. At that juncture, unification of COMINT activities seemed a question simply of means.

(U) Appearances, however, were deceiving.

(U) The question for the military COMINT organizations was twofold: to what extent should a central organization control -- as opposed to coordinate -- these critical resources. To what extent could the services surrender control over a vital wartime asset and still assure adequate support should another war occur?

(U) Facing strong opposition from the parent services, advocates of complete merger abandoned their arguments. A lesser step was taken. A Coordinating Committee session on February 15, 1946, approved proposals for a Joint Operating Plan (JOP), headed by a Coordinator of Joint Operations (CJO). At its meeting on May 1, 1946, the Coordinating Committee selected Colonel Harold G. Hayes, chief of ASA, as the first Coordinator of Joint Operations. The CJO was to allocate tasks between the services to eliminate duplication. The CJO might, for reasons of efficiency or economy, direct a collection station of one service to conduct intercept on behalf of another.

(U) Despite good intentions, allocation of tasks between the services remained tricky. The problem was that the actual authority of the CJO to enforce any of his instructions was unclear. Moreover, the services inevitably disagreed over what constituted a "joint" task -- each had its own working definition, usually excepting itself from most joint tasks.

(U) The JOP at one and the same time was a brave attempt by elements of the military services to come to grips with the need for centralized cryptologic direction and an attempt by other elements of the same services to prevent strong, centralized authority from developing. The JOP depended on good will and cooperation among the services, but, in an era of lean budgets, good will was in short supply.

[(U//FOUO) David A. Hatch, Director, Center for Cryptologic History, 972-2893s, dahatch@nsa]

Horizontal Line

Almanac 50th Anniversary Series