

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~Security Information~~

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COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE RATIONALE

5 March 1952

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS CODE WORD MATERIAL

Office of the Special Assistant for Intelligence
Department of State

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~THE PROBLEM:

To determine how the intelligence organizations of this Government should handle communications intelligence (COMINT) in relationship with intelligence from other sources in the production and dissemination of finished intelligence.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM:

1. National Security Council Intelligence Directive No. 9, dated 10 March 1950, which now governs the conduct of communications intelligence activities, provides in paragraph 6:

"The special nature of Communications Intelligence activities requires that they be treated in all respects as being outside the framework of other or general intelligence activities."

That statement codified previous wartime and post-wartime policy and practice, whereby the COMINT activity in each agency was separated from the other, general intelligence activity.*

2. Accordingly

*Even in time of war the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, and the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations, by memorandum of 10 March 1945 establishing the Army-Navy Communications Intelligence Board, directed that "the Board will function outside the framework of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and report directly to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, and the Commander-in-chief, U.S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations."

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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2. Accordingly, the uniform practice in this Government until quite recently has been that the production and dissemination of finished intelligence based on COMINT material is conducted as a specialized function by units physically and operationally separate from those producing and disseminating other or general intelligence; and that any necessary correlation of COMINT material with other intelligence material is accomplished by or under control of the separate units specializing in COMINT material.

3. Since the adoption of NSCID No. 9, there has been a tendency among the intelligence organizations, most extensively in the Central Intelligence Agency, to process COMINT in general intelligence units in direct conjunction with the processing of all other intelligence, and to disseminate COMINT by direct inclusion in general intelligence reports and estimates, so that the handling of COMINT ceases to be the exclusive function of a unit physically and organizationally separate from general intelligence units, and the finished intelligence produced from COMINT material ceases to be a specialized, distinctively COMINT product.

DISCUSSION:

-2-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~DISCUSSION:A. The Issue

The issue is not whether, but in what manner and under what conditions COMINT should be related with intelligence from other sources in the production and dissemination of finished intelligence. The necessity of relating COMINT with other information is unquestionable.

The issue is whether COMINT research, analysis, evaluation, and presentation, and the correlation of COMINT with other information, should be handled in direct conjunction with the processing of other intelligence by units producing general intelligence reports and estimates, or should be handled as a specialized function by COMINT units organizationally and physically separate from those engaged in general intelligence production; and whether COMINT should be disseminated by direct inclusion in general intelligence reports and estimates, or in distinctively COMINT reports, (in which intelligence from other sources is only ancillary to the COMINT content) and in separate COMINT supplements or appendices to general intelligence reports and estimates based on intelligence from other sources.

Discussion of the issue requires consideration of--

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- (a) the security of COMINT sources,
- (b) the substantive characteristics of COMINT, and
- (c) the comparative efficiency and convenience of including COMINT in or separating COMINT from general intelligence, --

in the production and dissemination of finished intelligence.

B. The Security of COMINT Sources

Of all intelligence sources, COMINT involves on the broadest scale the most sensitive balance between, on the one hand, the potential for long-range procurement of information of unique intelligence value and, on the other, the risk of loss of such information through compromise of COMINT operations and successes. The ability of this Government to obtain a continuous flow of valuable intelligence from the communications of foreign governments depends directly upon its ability to withhold from them any knowledge or reason to suspect that this Government has succeeded in exploiting their communications for intelligence purposes. It is obvious that such knowledge or

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suspicion would induce such foreign governments to adopt all practicable means of defeating further exploitation of their communications for intelligence purposes. This consideration applies not only to encrypted communications but also, in greater measure than might appear at first glance, to plain-language communications. Within the limits of operational practicability, the communicator may shift from plain-text radio communication to code or cipher, to wire telegraph or telephone, or to postal or courier communication.*

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-5-

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~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

The preservation of COMINT sources depends upon the ability of this Government to safeguard a large body of special information on such matters as the character and location of its COMINT facilities; the identities of its personnel engaged in COMINT activities or given access to COMINT; the extent of its intercept, collection, and cryptanalytic targets, capabilities, and accomplishments; and the very content of thousands of communications actually intercepted, read, and exploited for intelligence purposes.

US COMINT collaboration with Great Britain and Canada further enlarges the body of special information requiring to be safeguarded, and imposes upon this Government and the collaborating governments by express agreement a common set of standards for COMINT security which are, to say the least, extraordinary in strictness.

The strictness of the agreed standards may best be made clear by borrowing at some length from the language of part of the US-British agreement, as follows:*

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*BRUSA Agreement, Appendix B (as revised, December 1948),

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

"The value of Communication Intelligence in war and in peace cannot be over-estimated; conservation of the source is of supreme importance. It is essential, therefore, that the dissemination accorded to all related or resultant information be strictly controlled and limited. The physical security of related documents is not alone sufficient; it is essential that all reference to its existence either direct or indirect be avoided except among those to whom the knowledge is necessary for the proper performance of their duties. The time limit for the safeguarding of Communication Intelligence never expires.

* * * * *

"It is of the utmost importance that complete and absolute silence on all Communication Intelligence matters be maintained by those who have ever been connected with the Communication Intelligence organization, and by all individual recipients of Communication Intelligence, whether past or present, unless they are freed from this obligation by unmistakable and categorical order of proper authority as shall be designated by the respective parties. If at any time indiscreet matter referring to Communication Intelligence is broadcast or published, even by prominent people, this does not free those other persons who are, or have ever been, producers or recipients of Communication Intelligence from maintaining absolute silence, and special precautions may have to be taken.

"In time of war, the full value of Communication Intelligence cannot be realized unless operational use is made of it. However, before the decision is made to take action based on Communication Intelligence, studied effort shall be made to ensure that such action cannot be attributed to this source alone. In every case, unless completely impracticable, action against a specific target revealed by Communication Intelligence shall be preceded by appropriate reconnaissance or other suitable cover to which the enemy can reasonably be expected to attribute the action. (Any action taken in the absence of such safeguards must be considered in the light of the possibility of compromising the source.

The extent

-7-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

The extent of military advantage to be gained must be weighed carefully against the risk of losing the particular source and related Communication Intelligence sources and against the effect of such a loss on other Commands and on future operations. Only after it has been decided that the overall military advantage to be gained clearly outweighs the irretrievable loss which would probably result from a compromise of the source should action be taken in the absence of suitable cover.)

"When action as contemplated . . . above is finally ordered, particular care shall be taken on all occasions to ensure that personnel who may become engaged with the enemy in the course of such action are given only the minimum information, with no unnecessary detail.

"In time of peace the principle that the conservation of Communication Intelligence sources is a paramount consideration affecting any action taken in the light of Communication Intelligence shall be rigidly upheld.

"The principle of dissemination is based on 'the need to know.' Each item of Communication Intelligence shall therefore be made known only to those individuals who require it in the performance of their duties and who have been appropriately indoctrinated. Every effort shall be made to restrict the number of indoctrinated persons to an absolute minimum."

Certain special security safeguards have been prescribed by regulation or experience as being necessary to insure the preservation of COMINT sources. Those safeguards are above and beyond those established for TOP SECRET information in general.

Special

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Special clearance is required for persons given any knowledge of or access to COMINT, quite apart from regular TOP SECRET clearance. COMINT clearance must be based on a finding in each case by competent COMINT authority that there is a clear need to know. Persons cleared must be given a thorough indoctrination in the special security considerations pertaining to COMINT and must undertake in writing an obligation to maintain complete secrecy concerning COMINT activities not only during the period of access to COMINT but forever after.

COMINT material must normally be kept and COMINT activities conducted within specially secured, restricted areas, separate from those in which general intelligence or other activities are conducted.

When COMINT material has to be conveyed outside the special restricted areas, it must be at all times in the secure custody of cleared and fully indoctrinated officers.

It is strictly prohibited that any person take action on the basis of information from COMINT if the action might tend to compromise COMINT sources.

COMINT is

-9-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

COMINT is subject not only to TOP SECRET security classification but also to a special codeword, which designates its character as COMINT, must be prominently marked on every sheet of paper containing COMINT, and is itself subject to all the security restrictions applicable to COMINT. COMINT and the COMINT codeword must not be exposed to any uncleared person; and the COMINT material and activities must not be mentioned, nor the COMINT codeword used in its codeword sense, in the hearing of any uncleared person.

In order to maintain a high standard of compliance with those unusually stringent and complex security requirements it is a practical necessity in a large departmental or agency intelligence organization that the persons entrusted with the actual handling of COMINT (a) be limited in number to the minimum practicable for the production of finished intelligence from COMINT; (b) be organized in a special unit operationally separate from the units engaged in general intelligence production; (c) be required to conduct COMINT work within a specially secured area, restricted to persons cleared for COMINT and physically separated from the areas in which general

-10-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

intelligence or other activities are conducted; (d) be directly subject to special security discipline and surveillance by a responsible authority expert in COMINT security; (e) be required to conduct their necessary inquiries into general intelligence information and their necessary contacts with general intelligence units and personnel by means, through channels, and under conditions specially established, approved, or supervised by a responsible authority expert in COMINT security; (f) confine the contents of their intelligence production and dissemination to COMINT and such information from other sources as may be strictly ancillary to the COMINT content; and (g) disseminate COMINT only through channels, under conditions, and to recipients approved by a responsible authority expert in COMINT security.

The practical necessity of such limitations has been implicitly acknowledged in the traditional practice of the intelligence organizations of this Government.

When COMINT is processed in direct conjunction with other intelligence by personnel of general intelligence units and is disseminated by direct inclusion in general intelligence reports and estimates, the security of COMINT

sources

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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sources is subjected to substantially increased hazards, not only within the intelligence organization concerned, but throughout the COMINT structure.

The number of COMINT clearances among intelligence personnel is necessarily vastly increased; the clearance principle of strict "need to know" is perforce stretched, becoming in effect clearance on a basis of "might need to know."

The authorities bearing specific responsibility for COMINT security are deprived of the advantage afforded by a separate, specialized COMINT unit, for direct organizational and administrative control over the persons having access to and making use of COMINT material; and thus are unable to maintain as effectively the necessary security discipline and surveillance over such persons.*

A considerable and increasing amount of COMINT

activity

*On more than one occasion agencies which do not confine the handling of COMINT to a separate organizational unit and a separate restricted area have, through clerical error in the selection of distribution lists, forwarded copies of important COMINT documents to all offices entitled to general TOP SECRET distribution, with consequent multiple compromises of the COMINT codeword and COMINT material.

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

activity is carried on outside the separate, specially secured, restricted area. COMINT material in one form or another is carried into, stored in, worked upon, and discussed in outside areas used by or accessible to persons not cleared for COMINT.

Personnel of general intelligence units, using COMINT along with other intelligence, tend to regard COMINT from the security standpoint as no more sensitive than other TOP SECRET intelligence material, and to overlook the special requirements for the protection of COMINT sources. Lacking close security control by a responsible expert in COMINT security and the other safeguards erected upon a specially organized COMINT unit and a specially secured restricted area, such persons are free to take the "practical" course, rather than the sometimes cumbersome course required by good COMINT security practice, in conducting contacts with general intelligence personnel and inquiries into general intelligence information in connection with COMINT and in handling the custody and conveyance

of COMINT

-13-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

of COMINT material.*

Moreover, persons in general intelligence units handling COMINT along with other intelligence are frequently and necessarily in close official contact concerning general intelligence problems with persons of their own and other agencies who are not cleared for COMINT. In such normal contact there is great likelihood of more or less indirect allusion to COMINT either by accident or in the belief that a guarded reference is sufficiently secure. Any allusions, however indirect and guarded, tend to provoke the professional curiosity and pique the professional

pride of

*The following is an actual case involving senior intelligence officers of two different agencies: Both officers were engaged in general intelligence work and also were cleared for COMINT. A's agency, however, permitted him to be in actual possession of COMINT material, whereas B had COMINT clearance from his agency for special purposes only, without direct possession or use of COMINT material. A orally informed B that A's agency had prepared in draft an important estimate on Soviet capabilities and intentions for war, a subject of mutual official concern to A and B. At B's request A carried a copy of the draft, which contained some COMINT material and was prominently stamped with the COMINT classification and codeword, to B's office, which was not in a COMINT secure area, and left it with B, who took it to a departmental meeting and, without inquiry as to COMINT clearances exhibited it and read from it in the presence of an uncleared person.

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

pride of uncleared personnel and at the very least to undermine the principle of limiting the number of COMINT clearances. Even the most guarded references are a poor substitute for perfect silence.*

The breakdown of operational separation between COMINT activities and general intelligence activities in having COMINT handled along with other intelligence by general intelligence units has exposed the separate COMINT structure to heavy pressure for extension of the use of COMINT to various inter-agency staffs, committees, and working groups set up primarily to deal with general intelligence problems. Without express authorization or responsible security guidance from the United States Communications

Intelligence

*Actual cases have occurred in which general intelligence analysts of an agency which permits its general intelligence units to handle COMINT have stated to uncleared general intelligence analysts of another agency which does not, that certain conclusions proposed for inclusion in joint reports or estimates and questioned by the uncleared analysts as insufficiently supported were in fact well supported by other, very reliable intelligence (meaning COMINT) not available to the latter, who until then had had every reason to believe they had access to all available intelligence on the subject. One consequence of such cases has been a demand upon the COMINT authorities of the other agency for additional clearances of personnel in its general intelligence units.

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

Intelligence Board, such inter-agency general intelligence bodies have constituted themselves or have been constituted by one or more of the sponsoring intelligence organizations to handle COMINT along with other intelligence for general intelligence purposes.

The extension of COMINT into inter-agency general intelligence bodies has virtually forced those participating intelligence organizations which still follow the policy of COMINT separation to clear additional persons for COMINT in their general intelligence units solely for the purpose of qualifying such persons to attend meetings and take part in the other activities of inter-agency bodies in which COMINT is being used or at some time may be used.

The progressive extension of COMINT into the general intelligence units within one intelligence organization, thence into inter-agency general intelligence bodies, and thence into the general intelligence units of other intelligence organizations participating in inter-agency activities has set in motion a trend toward the eventual extension of COMINT clearance to all or a very sizeable proportion of the personnel of all the departmental or
agency

-16-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

agency intelligence organizations.* The trend to multiply COMINT clearances in the intelligence community has already passed the point of clear "need to know" and has entered the area of "might need to know."

The handling of COMINT by inter-agency general intelligence bodies involves other hazards to COMINT security than the multiplication of clearances. In general those hazards result from the fact that COMINT is only

incidental

*The precise extent of the increase in COMINT clearances attributable to the extension of COMINT handling into general intelligence units and inter-agency general intelligence bodies is not known. The following tabulation shows the general increase in total COMINT clearances by departmental or agency intelligence organizations in the COMINT structure since June 1950. (The totals include all officials of the Government to whom COMINT is disseminated or whose duties require knowledge of COMINT activities, as well as the personnel of the intelligence organizations; but exclude personnel of the technical COMINT producing agencies.)

Date	State	Army	Navy	AF	CIA	FBI
June 1950	110	401	295	238	263	25
May 1951	134	533	465	472	687	50
Feb. 1952	162	752	577	597	1467	50

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

incidental to the business of such bodies, that general intelligence personnel not directly subject to COMINT security discipline often constitute the predominant element of the membership, and that such bodies are not directly responsible to any overall COMINT security authority. The standards of COMINT security maintained in their proceedings vary considerably from one to another. Among the COMINT security hazards observed from time to time in connection with the operations of such bodies are the following: Some meetings are held outside COMINT restricted areas and without adequate provision to prevent the inadvertent admission of persons not cleared for COMINT. Papers containing COMINT material are mislaid and left in the meeting room subject to risk of exposure. Notes on the proceedings, including references to COMINT material, are taken and insecurely carried away. COMINT information is presented without sufficiently clear identification to impress itself upon the minds of all persons present. COMINT material and the COMINT codeword are permitted to be exposed to the view of uncleared attendants entering the meeting room on errands for participants. Participation of general intelligence personnel concerned with certain subject matter

in some

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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in some meetings that are held "on the COMINT level" and in some that are not, leads to their making inadvertent references to COMINT matters in non-COMINT meetings attended by uncleared persons.

The breakdown of separation between COMINT and general intelligence in having COMINT disseminated by inclusion in general intelligence reports and estimates tends to debase the COMINT codeword as a security safeguard for COMINT sources.

When a report or estimate contains any COMINT material, the entire document must bear the COMINT classification and codeword. The purpose of the COMINT codeword is to notify the reader that the material he is reading is COMINT and to remind him of the extraordinary obligations of secrecy he has undertaken concerning COMINT material. In order that the COMINT codeword may continue to serve its purpose effectively it is essential that COMINT be disseminated in documents containing only COMINT material and such other information as is necessary to bring out the significance of the COMINT material; and that in the clearest possible manner the other information be differentiated from, and be presented as ancillary to the COMINT material.

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~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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When COMINT material is merely included in a general intelligence report or estimate, the reader readily perceives that although the document bears the COMINT codeword it is essentially a general intelligence report or estimate based to a great extent upon intelligence that is not subject to any special COMINT security obligations on his part. Moreover, the form of presentation used in general intelligence reports and estimates fails to provide a sufficiently clear differentiation, and in many cases any differentiation at all, between what is derived from COMINT sources and what from other intelligence sources. Thus, the reader is deprived of assistance he greatly needs in order to relate his COMINT security obligations, at the time of reading and forever after, with the specific COMINT content of the report or estimate; he is thereby subjected to confusion and invited to indifference concerning the security implications of the COMINT codeword.

C. Substantive Characteristics of COMINT

The substance of COMINT is foreign telecommunications and nothing else. Each item of COMINT material
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-20-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

available for use in the production of finished intelligence is the end product of a long, complex series of operations, fraught with multiple possibilities of error, whereby one or more unique patterns of electronic impulses have been intercepted and recorded, transmuted into words, letters, or figures, passed with thousands of others through collection channels, analyzed or decrypted, identified as potentially significant, textually translated, reproduced, or compiled, and forwarded in the ultimate form to the intelligence organizations.

When that series of operations has been completed without error, the ultimate fact thereby established is that at a certain time A communicated certain words, letters, or figures to B. The use of intercepted communications as proof of the truth of the matter apparently asserted in them must therefore be limited according to principles broadly similar to those governing the use of hearsay in judicial evidence.

Telecommunications are normally terse and often obscure. The available communications rarely constitute the entire

-21-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

the entire correspondence on a subject between the very parties, much less a complete and accurate account of the whole subject.

The procurement of the necessary communications to meet specific intelligence requirements cannot normally be accomplished at will; the availability of any traffic at all is largely haphazard; and much or most traffic of the greatest potential intelligence value is not obtainable at any given time.

Arising from the special substantive characteristics of COMINT are two considerations:

- (1) the proper functions of COMINT as compared with general intelligence; and
- (2) the technique required for the proper evaluation and presentation of COMINT.

1. Function

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~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

1. Functions of COMINT -- By the very nature of COMINT its proper functions are, primarily, tactical; secondarily, strategic.

The proper function of COMINT should be considered as primarily tactical because its evidentiary force and its unique capability for penetrating secrecy bear most effectively on discovery of the policies, plans, intentions, and current actions of this Government's adversaries. That proposition has broad application in the military, political, and economic fields, and to adversaries ranging from an enemy in war to the other party in a negotiation for economic assistance.

COMINT is less suited to strategic functions because it is fragmentary, incomplete, and largely incapable of procurement to meet specific requirements; and because in general it has less force as evidence of basic facts, conditions, and developments relating to long-range military capabilities, economic war potential, and other elements of the strategic position of an adversary.

In the strategic field the proper function of COMINT is quite limited. Normally COMINT can serve only to supplement general intelligence in ad hoc ways depending upon the problem under consideration and the availability of pertinent

traffic

-23-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

traffic. Among the strategic uses of COMINT in supplementing general intelligence are the establishment of corroborative or additional details (such as unit identifications or locations in military order of battle); the suggestion of new lines of inquiry or analysis for general intelligence (such as might result from a reference in a message to the use of a scientific device not previously believed to have been developed); and the checking of conclusions or assumptions based on other intelligence (as in cases where some good evidence of certain kinds of production or shipments may be sufficient to contradict or give additional weight to such a conclusion or assumption).

The inherently limited character of the strategic function that COMINT properly can play has been too widely overlooked in recent years because of the increasing dearth of reliable information from any source on which to base strategic estimates concerning the Soviet Union. In this unprecedented situation COMINT has been called upon to perform the impossible -- that is, to take the place of the lacking general intelligence sources in supplying this Government's requirements for complete, basic, raw, factual information needed to determine the strategic position of the USSR.

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-24-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

Vast increases in the procurement of Soviet internal traffic in an effort to meet those requirements have not materially enlarged the inherently limited strategic function of COMINT as applied to problems of intelligence on the Soviet Union.

Because the substantive characteristics of COMINT are peculiar and its proper functions are limited as compared with those of general intelligence, the operational separation of the production and dissemination of finished intelligence based on COMINT is well justified by its substantive characteristics and functions, as well as by security considerations.

In its tactical use COMINT can and should be disseminated on the most direct possible basis from a specialized COMINT unit to the policy and operational officers who most need it. In its strategic uses it can and should be applied by a specialized COMINT unit in collaboration with the top echelons of the general intelligence units; and should be disseminated, as necessary, in the form of separate COMINT supplements or appendices to general intelligence reports and estimates. In cases where there is little or no evidence other than COMINT on which to base a strategic report or estimate -- as is sometimes the case with problems of Soviet intelligence -- the substantive characteristics of COMINT are such as to justify the handling of

the report

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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or estimate by a specialized COMINT unit rather than by a general intelligence unit.

2. Technique of COMINT Evaluation and Presentation --

Proper evaluation and presentation of COMINT require constant expert attention to its peculiar substantive characteristics.

Of all intelligence materials COMINT is the most consistently fraught with possibilities of error and susceptible of misinterpretation, erroneous evaluation, and misleading presentation.

For competent evaluation and presentation of COMINT it is necessary to be ever mindful of the character of the material as communications, of the processes by which the communications at hand were obtained, of the identity of the parties communicating, of the circumstances under which they communicated, and of probable incompleteness of the available correspondence between the parties and the information set forth in the available correspondence.

Special attention must be given to the logical and evidentiary principles governing the probative value to be attributed to the assertions contained in the communications. Such matters as the pattern of the communications channels used, or the availability of traffic of a particular kind on a certain

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~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

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circuit during a given period of time are often of greater significance than encyclopaedic references to all available information relating to the general subject matter of the communications.

Although some of the principles and techniques necessarily brought into play in the evaluation and presentation of COMINT also have application in dealing with certain aspects of other intelligence, the whole body of special expertness required for COMINT evaluation and presentation is sufficiently distinctive to indicate the desirability of specialized handling of COMINT by full-time experts trained in the applicable techniques.

When COMINT is used by personnel of general intelligence units, along with other intelligence, in the preparation of general intelligence reports and estimates, the handling of COMINT becomes a part-time concern of persons who, however expert they may be in their assigned geographic areas or fields of knowledge, are not full-time experts in COMINT and cannot normally be expected to have had the specialized training and experience in the characteristics of foreign telecommunications as such, which is essential to the achievement of maximum reliability and quality in the utilization of COMINT. In using COMINT

material

-27-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

material, persons engaged in general intelligence operations tend to underemphasize the essential character of the material as individual messages from A to B, from B to A, and so forth; to gloss over the manifold possibilities of error in any and every detail of the available texts; to disregard the normally fragmentary and haphazard availability of traffic; to over-emphasize and over-generalize the substantive content of available messages as support for conclusions based on general intelligence or on hypothesis; and to rely upon the lack of COMINT evidence in certain cases as a positive or negative indication.

In the preparation of general intelligence reports and estimates containing COMINT material, the authors often fail to distinguish clearly between information or conclusions derived from COMINT and those derived from general intelligence, and neglect to bring out regarding COMINT the essential facts as to who communicated what to whom. They habitually resort to uncritical presentations of COMINT material in such form as "COMINT reveals" this fact or that, or "fails to confirm" this hypothesis or that.

The presentation of COMINT material along with other intelligence as an integral part of general intelligence reporting impairs the reliability and quality of the finished intelligence based on COMINT.

D. Comparative

-28-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

D. Comparative Efficiency and Convenience of Including COMINT in or Separating COMINT from General Intelligence.

The reasons that have been advanced as justification for handling COMINT in direct conjunction with general intelligence and for the direct inclusion of COMINT in general intelligence reports and estimates are in substance the following:

(1) That COMINT material bearing on any given subject can best be evaluated and utilized by general intelligence analysts who are responsible for the handling of all other intelligence on the same subject;

(2) That direct inclusion of COMINT in general intelligence reports and estimates is necessary in order to make them complete, reliable, and authentic; and

(3) That the convenience of high-level recipients requires that general intelligence and COMINT material bearing on the same subject be disseminated in a single document rather than in separate documents for general intelligence and for COMINT.

Those reasons, taken together, argue that the production and dissemination of finished intelligence would be sufficiently enhanced in efficiency and convenience to warrant

overriding

-29-

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

~~TOP SECRET SUEDE~~~~Security Information~~

overriding the considerations, including the security of COMINT sources, which have hitherto dictated the operational separation of COMINT activities from other or general intelligence activities. For the reasons to be acceptable, it would need to be demonstrated not only that the intelligence product resulting from the inclusion of COMINT in general intelligence is more effective and the process more efficient and convenient, but sufficiently so to warrant rejection of the considerations underlying the traditional policy and practice of this Government in handling COMINT since the inception of its present COMINT program. Such demonstration must indeed be compelling, for at stake is the risk of loss of the COMINT material itself.

1. Evaluation and Utilization of COMINT -- There may be superficial appeal in the argument that COMINT material or any given subject can best be evaluated and utilized by general intelligence analysts who are responsible for all other intelligence on that subject, but the argument fails to take into account the highly specialized and limited functions that COMINT properly can perform, and the special techniques and experience required for competent evaluation and presentation of COMINT material. Moreover, as noted above, actual experience with the handling of COMINT by general intelligence units fails to show that their capacity for evaluation and utilization is

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in fact superior.

The argument would seem to imply that the handling of COMINT by general intelligence units is necessary in order that other intelligence pertinent to the COMINT may be brought to bear in its evaluation and utilization. That implication is unfounded.

Even where there is strict separation of COMINT activities, the other intelligence information required for the purposes of evaluating and utilizing COMINT material in the production of finished intelligence can be and regularly is made available under proper security controls to the COMINT specialists in their separate COMINT unit.

Specialization in COMINT does not preclude, but in fact requires familiarity with the requisite intelligence from other sources; and a normal and necessary feature of a properly organized separate COMINT unit is the establishment of secure channels through which access may be had when needed to the knowledge and opinion of experts in particular geographic areas or technical specialties in the general intelligence units.

Thus COMINT specialists are not at any disadvantage as compared with the personnel of the general intelligence units, but do have the advantage over them of special expertness and

training

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training in the substantive characteristics of COMINT material.

2. Completeness, Reliability, and Authenticity of General Intelligence Reports and Estimates -- The argu-

ment that COMINT material must be directly included in general intelligence reports and estimates in order to make them complete, reliable, and authentic rests on the unfounded assumptions that COMINT material having an essential bearing on the subject matter of general intelligence reports and estimates is so commonly available that it is inefficient and inconvenient to require separate treatment of COMINT material. As already pointed out, however, the availability of pertinent COMINT is haphazard; the primary function of COMINT is tactical; and the proper strategic uses of COMINT are quite limited and supplementary.

As a practical matter, the cases in which a general intelligence report or estimate actually requires COMINT support are comparatively few.*

Where

*It is worth noting that since the inception of the present series of National Intelligence Estimates in November 1950, of a total of about 65 estimates projected by the Board of National Estimates (of which some 43 were completed and approved) only four were regarded as requiring the direct inclusion of COMINT, and of those one failed to obtain concurrence in the IAC and another is yet to be completed.

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Where separation of COMINT activities is maintained, general intelligence reports and estimates on which available COMINT material has a necessary bearing can be and regularly are supplemented by special COMINT appendices prepared in the separate COMINT unit and disseminated with the general intelligence reports or estimates to the recipients having the requisite COMINT clearance and need to know. Insofar as there is real need to bring COMINT material into juxtaposition with a general intelligence report or estimate in order to insure the completeness, reliability, and authenticity of the latter, that need can be and is met by the device of the COMINT supplement or appendix. Where, on the other hand, the case is such that without COMINT material there could be no general intelligence report or estimate, then there is no persuasive reason why a general intelligence unit rather than a specialized COMINT unit should prepare such report or estimate.

3. Convenience of Recipients -- The argument that the convenience of high-level recipients requires that general intelligence and COMINT material on the same subject be disseminated in a single document, rather than in separate documents for general intelligence and for COMINT, merely proposes the correction of a minor inconvenience by the

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creation of a major one.

The direct inclusion of COMINT material in a general intelligence report or estimate creates a major inconvenience and potential source of confusion to the recipient which would seem to outweigh any minor inconvenience that might be occasioned by his having to consult two closely related documents rather than one.

If any COMINT material is directly included in a general intelligence report or estimate, the entire document must bear the COMINT classification and codeword. The use of that codeword denotes, and should reliably reflect in fact, an essentially COMINT content. If the recipient is given a document bearing the COMINT codeword, which contains page after page of text and conclusions based on other intelligence, and which is in content and form of presentation a general intelligence report or estimate in all but the fact that some COMINT material has been woven into the fabric, he is certain to be inconvenienced in proportion as he is conscientious about the observance of the extraordinary security obligations he has undertaken concerning COMINT. Such a document only tends to leave him confused, at the time of reading and thereafter, as to what specific parts of the text and conclusion

must be

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must be considered subject to COMINT security restrictions. He is likely to be confronted with the alternative either of foregoing free use of the other intelligence content lest he inadvertently compromise the COMINT content, or of making his own judgment as to how he will use the entire contents, regardless of COMINT security restrictions. Such inconvenience, confusion, and possible invitation to disregard COMINT security restrictions may be entirely avoided by keeping the pertinent COMINT material in separate form.

Where a separate COMINT appendix is used to supplement a general intelligence report or estimate, the actual degree of inconvenience to the recipient from having to read two documents instead of one is inversely proportional to the materiality of the COMINT in connection with the other intelligence used in the general intelligence report or estimate, and to the skill with which the COMINT appendix has been drafted. The convenience of the recipient is best served by confining the use of COMINT in connection with general intelligence reports and estimates to those cases in which COMINT has a material bearing, and by drafting COMINT appendices in such a way as to bring out most effectively the precise bearing that COMINT has.

CONCLUSIONS:

-35-

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1. The unique security considerations involved in COMINT must be governing if we are to retain this important source. Furthermore, uniformity of practice among the intelligence agencies is a basic element of this security.

2. Security considerations require that the processing and dissemination of COMINT be handled on the basis of segregation from other intelligence operations. Efficient and effective handling of COMINT is possible on a segregated basis. The production and dissemination of COMINT on an integrated basis with general intelligence presents an unnecessary security hazard not warranted by improved effectiveness or efficiency in the intelligence product and process.

3. Information from all sources must be brought to bear on intelligence problems. However, the necessary correlation of COMINT with other intelligence should be essentially a COMINT process rather than a general intelligence operation. Such correlation can be handled without serious detriment to the effectiveness of the intelligence product or to the efficiency of the intelligence process, by collaboration between the separate unit handling COMINT and the highest echelons of the general intelligence units.

4. The

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4. The policy enunciated in paragraph 6 of NSCID 9, which calls for such segregation of COMINT activity from other intelligence activity is sound and should be followed by all agencies in the production and dissemination of finished intelligence.

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