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A REPORT

TO THE

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

by

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

on

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY (COMSEC)

October 20, 1953

WASHINGTON

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 06-14-2012 pursuant to E.O. 13526

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October 20, 1953

NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

to the

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

on

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY (COMSEC)

Pursuant to a Presidential directive of October 24, 1952, a special committee of the National Security Council for COMSEC Matters composed of the Secretaries of State and Defense, and including for this purpose, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General and the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, advised by the Director of Central Intelligence, have this date approved the enclosed directive on the subject for a trial period of one year.

Accordingly, the enclosure is transmitted herewith for implementation by all appropriate executive departments and agencies of the U. S. Government for a trial period of one year. Pursuant to paragraph 1-b of the enclosure the Secretaries of State, Defense and the Treasury, the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Director of the National Security Agency and the Atomic Energy Commission are being requested to designate representatives for the United States Communications Security Board (USCSB).

JAMES S. LAY, Jr.
Executive Secretary

cc: The Secretary of the Treasury
The Attorney General
The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
The Secretary of the Army
The Secretary of the Navy
The Secretary of the Air Force
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director of the National Security Agency
The Atomic Energy Commission

October 20, 1953

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

on

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY

The Presidential directive of October 24, 1952:

a. Stated that the security of Federal communications (COMSEC) is a national responsibility, and that COMSEC policies and procedures must be integrated so as to enable the various departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate effectively in such matters and to satisfy legitimate requirements for the security of their messages;

b. Designated the Secretaries of State and Defense as a Special Committee of the National Security Council for COMSEC Matters, to establish such policies relating to COMSEC as will achieve the maximum security of Federal telecommunications, and to keep the President advised of such policies through the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council*; and

c. Directed the Special Committee of the NSC to prepare and issue in the COMSEC field directives which will:

* The President in approving this directive also directed that the Attorney General shall be a member of the Special Committee whenever matters of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation are before that Committee. In accordance with the President's instructions regarding the normal operation of the Council, the heads of departments and agencies not represented on the Special Committee, shall also participate as members of the Special Committee whenever matters of direct interest to their respective agencies are before that Committee.

(1) Rescind the Executive Order of July 3, 1945 entitled "Cryptographic Security with Respect to Certain Communications of the Government"*.

(2) Establish a United States Communications Security Board (USCSB) responsible for integrating policies and procedures affecting the security of Federal telecommunications.

(3) Provide for the establishment of appropriate responsibilities and authorities to assure within the various departments and agencies of the Government, among other things:

(a) High and uniform standards of communications security;

(b) Effective cooperation in COMSEC matters between departments and agencies concerned;

(c) The adequacy of the cryptographic systems used;

(d) Coordination of COMSEC problems, particularly policies with respect to foreign governments;

(e) Satisfaction of legitimate requirements for the security of telecommunications.

Pursuant to the foregoing and to the provisions of Section 101 and Section 211 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended, the Special Committee of the National Security Council for COMSEC hereby authorizes and directs as follows:

1. The United States Communications Security Board (USCSB):

a. There is hereby established the United States Communications Security Board (USCSB), hereinafter referred to as the Board, which

* The Order was classified and was not published in the Federal Register. It was rescinded by the President on October 20, 1953

shall be a body acting for and under the aforesaid Special Committee and shall operate in accordance with the provisions of this Directive and any other directives which may be issued by the Special Committee.

b. The Board shall be composed of one representative of each of the following:

(1) The Secretary of State
(2) The Secretary of Defense
(3) The Secretary of the Treasury
(4) The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
(5) The Secretary of the Army
(6) The Secretary of the Navy
(7) The Secretary of the Air Force
(8) The Director of Central Intelligence
(9) The Director of the National Security Agency
(10) The Atomic Energy Commission

c. Under the authority of the Special Committee it shall be the responsibility of the Board:

(1) To integrate policies and procedures affecting the security of Federal telecommunications;

(2) To establish broad policies necessary to:

(a) Insure high and uniform standards of COMSEC within the various departments and agencies of the Government.

(b) Institute and maintain effective cooperation in COMSEC matters among the departments and agencies concerned.

(c) Achieve the maximum practicable degree of security of Federal telecommunications.

(d) Satisfy legitimate requirements for the security of telecommunications of the departments and agencies.

(e) Guide the relations of the U. S. Government with foreign governments and international organizations in COMSEC matters.

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(f) Guide the actions to be taken by the Executive Agent in COMSEC matters.

(3) To approve the long-range plans for communications security of the U. S..

(4) To advise the Special Committee with respect to COMSEC policy matters decided by the Board and make recommendations as appropriate.

(5) To study the COMSEC standards and practices of any department or agency in the field of COMSEC and make recommendations as necessary to insure compliance with the directives of the Board in this field.

d. The Board shall elect its own Chairman from among its membership.

e. The Board shall have a staff headed by an executive secretary who shall be appointed by the Chairman with the approval of a majority of the Board.

f. The Board shall meet at the call of the Chairman or at the request of any member, and shall determine its own procedures subject to the provisions of this directive.

g. The Board shall reach its decisions by majority vote. The Director, National Security Agency, will have no vote in matters involving appeals from his own decisions. In the event that the Board votes and reaches a decision, any dissenting member of the Board may appeal from such decision. Such appeal must be made within 15 days to the Special Committee. In the event that the Board votes and fails to reach a decision, any member of the Board may appeal to the Special Committee and such appeal must be made within 15 days of the inconclusive vote. In

either event the Special Committee shall review the matter, and its determination thereon shall be final. Appeals by the Director of NSA, or by the representative of any of the Military Departments, shall be filed only with the approval of the Secretary of Defense.

h. No action shall be taken with respect to any matter forming the subject of an appeal until the appeal is decided; provided that, if the Secretary of Defense determines, after consultation with the Secretary of State (and the Attorney General and the heads of other departments and agencies as appropriate), that the subject matter presents a problem of an emergency nature and requires immediate action, his decision shall govern, pending the result of the appeal. In such an emergency situation the appeal may be taken directly to the President by the Special Committee.

i. The Board shall invite the head of any department or agency not represented on the Board to designate a representative to participate with the Board in consideration of matters of direct interest to such a department or agency, to the end that the communications security needs of such departments and agencies may be considered; and heads of departments and agencies not represented on the Board may present, through the Executive Secretary of the Board, communications security matters for consideration by the Board.

j. Departments or agencies not represented on the Board may appeal from decisions of the Board in the manner prescribed for departments and agencies represented on the Board.

2. Directive to the Secretary of Defense

a. The Department of Defense is hereby designated as Executive Agent of the Government for all COMSEC matters.

b. As Executive Agent, the Department of Defense is charged with the mission of:

(1) Providing centralized, over-all cognizance of the measures necessary to provide and assure the adequacy of the COMSEC techniques and materials used by the Government;

(2) Formulating for the Board integrated technical and operating policies, programs, and long-range plans required to maintain high and uniform standards to ensure the security of Federal telecommunications; and

(3) Providing advice and recommendations on any aspect of the field of COMSEC.

c. As Executive Agent the Department of Defense is empowered to take action within policies and procedures established by the Board, in all COMSEC matters affecting the departments and agencies of the Government provided, however, that where exception to its action is made by the Secretary of a department or by the Head or Director of an agency outside of the Department of Defense, such exceptions shall be referred to the Board. Pending Board review, if the Department of Defense determines that the subject matter presents a problem of an emergency nature and requires immediate action it may refer the matter to the Special Committee for immediate decision.

d. Subject to the specific provisions of this Directive and subsequent directives issued by competent authority, the Director of the National Security Agency shall act for the Executive Agent in all COMSEC matters set forth in subparagraphs (1) through (13) below and any others

which may be specified by the Special Committee or the Board. With respect to the Military Departments, the Director, NSA, will perform his functions under the immediate direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus, in the fields of cryptosecurity, transmission security, physical security, and cover and deception, it shall be the responsibility of the Director, NSA:

(1) To review and approve, or, in the absence of approved proposals, to prescribe the cryptoprinciples incorporated or to be incorporated in any telecommunications equipments and systems and in any COMSEC equipments and systems used by the departments and agencies of the Government.

(2) To review and approve, or, in the absence of approved proposals, to prescribe cryptosecurity rules, regulations, and instructions applicable to the operation and use of any crypto-equipments and systems and of any COMSEC equipments and systems.

(3) To perform technical analysis of Federal telecommunications for the purpose of determining the degree of COMSEC being provided by the cryptoprinciples, materials and procedures utilized by the departments and agencies as well as the effect on COMSEC of the communications procedures and practices also being utilized; making arrangements as appropriate to obtain the material required for such analysis. (See paragraph 3-a-(2).)

(4) To review and evaluate communications procedures developed by the departments and agencies to determine whether such procedures will provide and maintain transmission security; and to recommend

revisions and additional rules and procedures as required. To accomplish this the Director, NSA, may perform technical analyses of Federal telecommunications and shall make the necessary arrangements with the departments and agencies to obtain the material required for analysis. (See paragraphs 3-a-(1) and -(2).)

(5) In collaboration with the departments and agencies as appropriate, to prescribe minimum standards for the physical security of cryptomaterial.

(6) In collaboration with the departments and agencies, to assist in the preparation of and to review the communications portions of all cover and deception plans. To formulate and promulgate the basic policies used in such portions.

(7) To obtain from the departments and agencies their requirements for crypto-equipments and materials and to formulate, for consideration by the Board, integrated programs for the research, development, production and procurement necessary to meet these requirements and adequate to ensure the continuing security of Federal communications.

(8) To review and coordinate the integrated cryptosecurity research and development program and to conduct research and development necessary to support it. Subject to prior notification to and coordination with the Director, NSA (in the case of the Military Departments, approval by the Director, NSA), departments and agencies may initiate and pursue such research and development projects as may be necessary to support their COMSEC activities.

(9) To produce cryptomaterial necessary to meet the legitimate requirements of the departments and agencies and to ensure that there is adequate capacity to meet these requirements. In so doing, the Director, NSA, by mutual agreement will authorize the departments and agencies to engage in the production of cryptomaterial provided that such production is conducted in accordance with technical cryptologic criteria prescribed by the Director, NSA, and further provided that the Director, NSA, is kept informed of the production accomplished.

(10) In meeting operational requirements, to ensure the necessary compatibility and, in so far as practicable, the standardization of crypto-equipments and material in order to promote a maximum of efficiency and economy in their procurement, operation, and maintenance. Determination of the acceptability of an equipment in meeting the operational requirements is a responsibility of the departments and agencies.

(11) To furnish services and materials for the COMSEC program of the departments and agencies under mutually agreeable fiscal arrangements.

(12) To conduct liaison on technical COMSEC and related matters with the cryptologic authorities of foreign nations and international organizations.

(13) To provide technical guidance and support for cryptosecurity training conducted by the departments and agencies.

c. Except on matters which have been voted on by the Board and subject to the direction of the Secretary of Defense (and in the case of the

Military Departments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff), the Director, NSA, shall discharge his responsibilities in accordance with his own judgment. In exercising the authority over COMSEC matters granted in this Directive, the Director, NSA, shall:

(1) Obtain from the departments and agencies such information as he may require in performing his functions, as authorized in this Directive or any other directive subsequently issued.

(2) Act through the department and agency representatives on the Board or, in the case of departments and agencies not represented on the Board, through the duly authorized representatives of the heads of such departments and agencies.

(3) Arrange with the authorized representative of a department or agency for required liaison with subordinate elements of that department or agency. ok

(4) Refer violations of COMSEC instructions to the head of the department or agency concerned for such action as may be deemed necessary and, if appropriate corrective action is not taken, refer the subject to the Board.

3. Directive to the Departments and Agencies of the Government

a. All departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall:

(1) Organize and conduct their communications security activities as they see fit subject to the provisions of law, the directives of the President, the provisions of this Directive, and any other directives which may be issued by the Special Committee. Nothing in this Directive shall relieve the individual departments and agencies

of their responsibilities for executing all measures required to assure the security and efficiency of their own telecommunications.

(2) Not be required to disclose to the Director, NSA, the Board, or any of its committees the contents of any official communications concerning its activities, if, in the opinion of the head of the department or agency, the disclosure would be contrary to the national interest. Nothing in this Directive shall be construed to give the Board or any of its representatives the right to inspect any department or agency without approval by the head thereof.

(3) Bring to the attention of the Board all rules and regulations in conflict with the provisions of this Directive.

4. Special Terms Used in this Directive are Defined as Follows:

a. Telecommunications - Any transmission, emission or reception of sign, signals, writing, images and sounds or intelligence of any nature by wire, radio, visual, or other electromagnetic system.

b. Federal Telecommunications - Those telecommunications which are of an official character dealing with governmental affairs and are originated by or intended for officials of the United States Government. Specifically exempted from this definition is that portion of the communications activities conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency in accordance with the authorities granted the Director of Central Intelligence under NSCID No. 5.

c. Communications Security - The protection resulting from all measures designed to deny to unauthorized persons information of value which might be derived from the possession and study of telecommunications, or

to mislead unauthorized persons in their interpretation of the results of such a study. Communications security includes: (1) transmission security, (2) cryptosecurity, and (3) physical security of communications security materials and information.

d. Transmission Security - Transmission security is that component of communications security which results from all measures designed to protect transmissions from unauthorized interception, traffic analysis, and imitative deception.

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e. Cryptosecurity - That component of communications security which results from the provision of technically sound cryptosystems and their proper use.

f. Cryptoprinciple - The characteristics of the elements involved in, and the fundamental rule of operation, motion, or activity inherent in a cryptosystem.

g. Cryptosystem (Cryptographic System) - The associated items of cryptomaterial which are used as a unit and which provide a single means of encryption and decryption.

h. Cryptomaterial - All material, including documents, devices and/or equipment or apparatus employed in the encryption or decryption of telecommunications.

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i. Crypto-equipment - The crypto-apparatus, mechanisms, machines or devices used in the encryption or decryption of telecommunications.

j. Physical Security - That component of security which results from all physical measures necessary to safeguard classified equipment, material and documents from access thereto or observation thereof by unauthorized persons.