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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

1 August 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY DOUGLAS

From: Brig Gen Lansdale, OSO/OSD SL

Subject: Missing NSA Personnel

This is a summary of the case of two persons missing at the National Security Agency, Ft. Meade, Md. As you know, this is a Department of Defense agency, directed by Lt Gen Samford and under OSO's staff responsibility.

Bernon F. Mitchell, 31, and William H. Martin, 29, are both mathematicians engaged in statistical research at NSA, as GS-11 civilian employees. Martin has been doing graduate work, (in statistical research, collateral to his assigned problem at NSA), at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. Both entered NSA in 1957 after service in the Navy with the Naval Security Group in Japan.

Mitchell and Martin went on summer leave together on 24 June, telling fellow employees they might visit their parents, the Mitchell's in Eureka, California, and the Martin's in Ellensburg, Washington. They hinted that if they had not returned in two weeks, 11 July, they would take another week of annual leave, returning 18 July. Thus, they were not missed until after 18 July.

A check with the parents on the West Coast indicated that neither son had visited his family. The parents stated that their sons may have gone to Havana or Mexico City, where the sons had been for a brief vacation in the Christmas holiday, 1959. This previous visit to Cuba and Mexico was unknown to NSA, which requires employees to report foreign visits to NSA Security prior to departure; neither Mitchell nor Martin so reported.

NSA Security, in consultation with the FBI and CIA, then commenced investigating. So far, the investigation has revelaed that Mitchell and Martin took a taxi to Washington National Airport on 25 June, each with a single suitcase. Mitchell had drawn $350 from the bank, all but closing

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his account. Martin's finances are still unknown. At the airport, both purchased one-way tickets to Mexico City on Eastern Airlines. They flew to Mexico City, arriving the same day. [redacted] they checked in a third-rate "flea bag" hotel on 25 June. A subsequent report is that they flew to Havana on Cuban Airlines on 1 July. There is no further report of their movements after 1 July.

It is believed that their trip was voluntary. Mitchell and Martin were alone in the taxi to the airport. Martin went alone back to Washington to obtain a notarized statement of U.S. citizenship required by the airline prior to issuance of a ticket to Mexico; Mitchell had his already. A check of the passenger manifest revealed no known names of Communist or criminal individuals.

Security Aspects. The route taken by Mitchell and Martin is a likely one if they were defecting to the Communists, Havana - Moscow transportation being easy and the visit to Mexico being within the agent pattern.

Both had access to compartmented, classified projects at NSA dealing with Soviet [redacted] Martin's knowledge is on [redacted] he brought himself up-to-date on the project when he returned to NSA for the summer from the University of Illinois. Mitchell has knowledge of a [redacted] project. An initial check of these projects has shown no missing documents or material which were available to the two; a more thorough re-check is now being made.

NSA is now estimating the security implications if Mitchell and Martin are in Communist custody. This estimate will be completed later this week.

Personal Aspects. Mitchell left behind a new car and a baby grand piano, both fully paid. He left $100 with his neighboring landlady, to pay rent on his house in Laurel, Md., until 15 August. Martin had checked out of a Laurel motel where he had lived upon return to Ft. Meade; his quarters at the University of Illinois are being checked today. Also, Mitchell's safe-deposit box in a Laurel bank will be checked today.

A check of lie-detector results at time of employment revealed that Mitchell had some sexual aberration prior to age 20. Investigation then

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showed he had been having psychiatric treatment recently for highly emotional disturbance. Over the telephone, the night of 30 July, Mitchell's older brother in Eureka, California, volunteered to an NSA Security officer that Mitchell might have homosexual reasons for the trip; the NSA official replied truthfully that there was no evidence of this known. Martin's mother, in Ellensburg, Washington, in her talks to the NSA Security officer described her son as a genius, far superior to ordinary men. Havana and Mexico City are known international gathering-places of homosexuals. Thus, there is the possibility of a sexual purpose in the trip, with the further possibility of foul-play in an ordinary civil crime sense.

Publicity Aspects. The writer was informed of this affair the afternoon of 30 July by General Samford. Your office and the duty officer for Public Affairs were then alerted, while the further details reported above were being learned. Upon learning them, plus learning that Martin's parents had been in touch with Congressman Edith Nourse May in Yakima, Washington, and that May's local office on the Hill had made a routine call to NSA, a meeting with Assistant Secretary Murray Snyder, Public Affairs, was arranged.

The meeting with Murray Snyder was held the morning of 31 July. Representatives of your office, OSO, NSA, and CIA were present. After considerable discussion, it was decided to handle any publicity initially as a routine AWOL case. The parents were then called and notified that the case was being turned over to local authorities and the FBI was informed. The parents stated they didn't want publicity and were told that publicity might well arise from police inquiries. Both the Laurel and D.C. police were then notified, and are now working on the case. Bernard Wells, FBI liaison with Defense was notified formally, although he has been in consultation on the case with NSA these past days. He was dubious about FBI participation, since the only case to date is "disobedience to an administrative order." Later, Al Belmont, Assistant Director who is acting in Hoover's absence, said that the case was still outside FBI jurisdiction.

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Congressman May's local office is being informed, in response to her request, that Mitchell and Martin have failed to return from summer leave, and that local authorities and the FBI have been notified. Any press queries in Defense will be referred to John Moore in OSD Personnel who handles routine AWOL cases, and he will have this same story.* If queried about access to classified information, it will be pointed out that all NSA employees have some access to classified information, that Mitchell and Martin were GS-11's, relatively junior mathematicians engaged in statistical research.

However, it is believed that the Mexico City and Havana aspects will come from press contacts with the local police, and possibly with either the families or Congressman May on the West Coast. It has the potential of a sensational story, if the press starts speculating.

Mitchell and Martin have been administratively relieved of all duties at NSA, pending further information.

* Orville Split, in Snyder's office, is now handling press inquiries directly. Baltimore papers have picked up the story that Mitchell and ~~Monroe~~ Martin are missing, from the Maryland State Police.

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