Approved for release by NSA on 12-01-2011, Transparency Case# 63852

United Pigeons Service (UPS)?

Editor's Note: The following historical note was gleaned from the holdings of the NSA Cryptologic Archives by our Publisher.

On 19 February 1943, an ad hoc committee of the Joint Communications Board (JCB) presented its report to the parent organization which subsequently rejected the entire report. After reading [Hold your breath!] the title of the report, you will understand why the report might have been rejected. The title is as follows:

A SURVEY LOOKING INTO THE MERGING OF ARMY AND NAVY COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, INITIALLY TO INVOLVE REMOVAL OF DUPLICATION AND OVERLAPS AND THE PERFORMANCE BY ONE SERVICE OF CERTAIN FUNCTIONS FOR THE OTHER, AS WELL AS ANY OTHER WAYS AND MEANS OF WORKING TOWARD THE END IN VIEW [*sic*]

From the report, which dealt with many facets of communications, we have extracted one portion which is now declassified and presented for public information. It documents one diversity then existing among the military services. The extract reads as follows:

Part B, Section 5 — Pigeon Service.

I. FACTS BEARING ON THE CASE.

1. The Army employs carrier pigeons in the Ground Forces for paratroops, tanks and airborne infantry, and in the Air Forces for troop carrier commands, anti-submarine patrols and other long-range aviation units. Five pigeon units are now overseas in the various combat zones, while in the United States and possessions there are twenty pigeon units comprising a total of 65 officers and 1,061 enlisted men, caring for a total of 22,569 birds. The pigeon service in the Navy is not under the cognizance of the Director of Naval Communications but is under the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. The Navy employs pigeons only in connection with lighter-than-air craft and maintains lofts at five stations. Five additional lighter-than-air stations have recently been established and will be equipped with pigeon lofts. In all, the Navy employs approximately 500 pigeons.

II. DISCUSSION.

1. By its very nature, pigeon training is a local problem and it is desirable that the birds be acclimated and trained in the locality where they are to be employed. Naval air stations being generally disassociated from Army installations, there is little opportunity for any coordinated action in this connection.

III. CONCLUSIONS.

1. There is no overlap or duplication between the Army and Navy in connection with carrier pigeons.