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4 June 1954

P. J. Patton

## NSA Personnel Policies

1. I strongly disagree with so much of the draft reply to the OSO/QSD letter on personnel policies prepared by your Special Assistants as concerns military/civilian relationships (paragraph g). Paragraph g seems to me to be inconsistent within itself and not to reflect your policy as I understand it. Except for sub-paragraph g(10), which is excellent, the views expressed would be endorsed by, and receive support by conviction from only a minor segment of your employees and the intelligence community as a whole.

2. I am hopeful that the difficulty is essentially semantic, and that the suggested alternate draft attached, or a reasonable facsimile, will prove satisfactory to them, and will be approved by you.

3. Because I also have several suggested minor changes to the Special Assistants' draft, the attached draft is prepared as a complete package which I recommend be approved in its entirety.

P. J. PATTON  
Chief, Current Operations Branch  
Plans and Policy Division

Incl:  
a/s

cc: V/DIR

S/S

S/ASST - Mr. Friedman

S/ASST - Capt. Holtwick

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

ATTN: General Graves B. Erskine, USMC (Ret.)

SUBJECT: NSA Personnel Problems

Reference: OSO/OED Memo for Director, NSA, subject as above, Serial A 20470,  
16 Apr 54

1. I welcome the opportunity afforded by your memorandum of 16 April to review our progress and to discuss some of the personnel problems confronting this Agency in carrying out its assigned missions. These problems are not exclusive to the Communications Intelligence field. They also occur to a considerable degree in Communications Security. My comments in answer to your memorandum will apply with equal force to both segments of the cryptologic activities.

2. As you point out, one of the most important of these problems is that of strengthening the career aspects of the cryptologic effort, as regards both civilian and military personnel, and within the Agency as well as outside it in the important area of field support. I am convinced that professionalism is essential to our maximum success in the cryptologic effort. Professionalism is essentially a matter of developing and retaining individuals who are professionals. The non-existence of an industrial, commercial, or academic counterpart in cryptologic technology as it has developed in government service makes it impossible to obtain professionals except by establishing attractive and satisfying careers for personnel within the government agencies contributing to cryptologic production. The necessity for this is forcefully pointed out in the Robertson Report, entitled "Potentialities of COMINT for Strategic Warning," sponsored by the NSA Scientific Advisory Board, and provided to you with CIB 000199, 6 November 1953, as well as in the Brownell Report. Because of my conviction in this respect I have devoted much effort during the past three years in promoting a spirit of professionalism in NSA.

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3. I have the following comments on the items mentioned in paragraph 2 of the reference; your subparagraph lettering applies:

a. NSA Civilian employees should be placed in a more favorable position insofar as overseas duty is concerned. The ability to make commitments for concurrent travel of dependents, free and adequate medical service, free life insurance where hazards exist, transportation by commercial carrier, movement of household goods and automobiles, payment of station allowances, reimbursement for expenses (storage, etc.) resulting from overseas movement, availability of commissary, PX, liquor mess, and club privileges, and the like would go far toward solving our existing problems. Specific legislation may be necessary to assure some of these privileges; administrative action by the Department of Defense could probably obtain others. It is appreciated that employee commitments to accept overseas assignments on request may be necessary and no major difficulties are anticipated in this respect.

b. The use of civilian intercept operators has been given serious thought with a view to overcoming some of the current handicaps caused by rapid turnover in military intercept operators and the increasing technical difficulties in intercepting complex types of transmission. But civilian intercept clearly cannot be regarded as a universal panacea for our COMINT collection ailments. Even the UK, which has a well established civilian collection program, has encountered serious difficulties, although their situation is much more favorable than that of this country in at least two major respects; the enormously greater percentage of their intercept positions which can be, and are, located at home; and the relatively greater stature and advantages of civil service as a profession in the U.K. I am however taking two exploratory actions:

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- (1) I am discussing a proposal for increased CIA participation in the national collection effort with the Director of Central Intelligence.
- (2) I am making plans for the experimental conversion of a service-operated intercept station to civilian operation by NSA.

g. The restrictions imposed by government security regulations which effect the recruitment of otherwise highly qualified personnel generally fall into two main categories:

- (1) Many qualified applicants, particularly in the linguistic field, are aliens or recently naturalized U.S. citizens, or have intimate foreign connections. This is true particularly for linguists familiar with the more critical oriental and middle-eastern languages. These standards can be waived at my discretion, but each case must be judged on its individual merits, comparing the operational need with the results of all investigative material and information available.
- (2) Occasionally it is found that top-level scientists in fields in which NSA is vitally interested have records of affiliation in varying degrees with questionable, Communist-inspired or infiltrated, and even cited organizations.

The selection and investigative standards of USCIB Directive No. 3 in some respects are more restrictive than the provisions of E.O. 10450. The restrictions of neither are considered unreasonable and I do not recommend that they be relaxed or that authority be granted to make exceptions other than that now in existence. CIA has a somewhat different problem, in that certain assignments can be fulfilled only by specific individuals with definite

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backgrounds and qualifications which in themselves would disqualify an individual from COMINT employment.

4. The problems of civilian career policies may be subdivided into four subcategories: (1) overseas duty (discussed in subparagraph a, above); (2) the status of the civil servant in the U.S. vis-a-vis other occupations (this is less favorable than I would desire but I consider the problem goes beyond this discussion); (3) relationships between military and civilian elements of NSA (discussed in subparagraph g, below); and (4) the betterment of the situation of the civilian employes of NSA headquarters within established civil service policies. In this latter field, great strides have been made in the past three years as indicated by the charts and summaries attached as Inclosure 1. In addition, action will be taken to reach an agreement with the military cryptologic agencies whereby a free exchange of civilian employees is possible in an integrated career development program. Each agency would be guaranteed the return of its employee on the completion of a tour of duty with another agency. Much, of course, remains to be done, and I feel that one of the major problems which you can help in solving is the establishment of additional super-grades.

*So long as the civilian employes are administered according to Civil Service Commission rules*  
I do not believe that NSA should operate under rules for the release of "deadwood" personnel differing in any material respect from those

set up by the Civil Service Commission for the government services as a whole. *An*

Existing regulations are adequate, although the application of existing regulations by supervisory personnel may not yet be perfect. I expect a continuing improvement in the quality and performance of my supervisors as a result of the well-advanced management improvement and executive development programs of NSA. Better usage of available procedures for release of "deadwood" personnel is expected as

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a result. The problem we face with civilians is no worse than, and not very different from, the problems faced by the military services in the severance of "deadwood" officers. X

f. (1) The second major recommendation of the Majority Report of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Attack on Pearl Harbor was that the military services proceed forthwith to provide that (p. 253):

"... officers be selected for intelligence work who possess the background, penchant, and capacity for such work; and that they be maintained in the work for an extended period of time in order that they may become steeped in the ramifications and refinements of their field ... . Efficient intelligence services are just as essential in time of peace as in war, and this branch of our armed services must always be accorded the important role which it deserves."

(2) The foregoing recommendation was repeated and amplified later on (p. 257) in the same Report, as follows:

"8. The coordination and proper evaluation of intelligence in times of stress must be insured by continuity of service and centralization of responsibility in competent officials (Emphasis in original.)

... Nevertheless, there is substantial basis, from a review of the Pearl Harbor investigation in its entirety, to conclude that the system of handling intelligence was seriously at fault and that the security of the Nation can be insured only through continuity of service and centralization of responsibility in those charged with handling intelligence. And the assignment of an officer having an aptitude for such work over an extended period of time should not impede his progress nor affect his promotions. (Emphasis in original.)

The professional character of intelligence work does not appear to have been properly appreciated in either the War or Navy Departments. It seems to have been regarded as just another tour of duty, as reflected by limitations imposed on

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the period of assignment to such work, among other things. The committee has received the distinct impression that there was a tendency, whether realized or not, to relegate intelligence to a role of secondary importance.

As an integrated picture, the Pearl Harbor investigations graphically portray the imperative necessity, in the War and Navy Departments, (1) for selection of men for intelligence work who possess the background, capacity, and penchant for such work; (2) for maintaining them in the work over an extended period of time in order that they may become steeped in the ramifications and refinements of their field and employ this reservoir of knowledge in evaluating data received; and (3) for the centralization of responsibility for handling intelligence to avoid all of the pitfalls of divided responsibility which experience has made so abundantly apparent."

In the light of the foregoing recommendations, I do not consider that the military cryptologic career programs of the Armed Services are developing. On the contrary, the Army program seems to be atrophying and the Navy program retrogressing. The fault does not lie primarily with the service cryptologic agencies, which appear to be well aware of deficiencies and the action to be taken to correct them. They form, however, a very small segment of the entire military establishment, which is dominated by "line-mindedness" to such an extent that specialization is professionally penalized. This is self-perpetuating; not only does the specialist in uniform rarely rise to general or flag rank, but those who do are rarely assigned to positions where they can exercise a corrective influence on this state of mind. One major contribution to solution of this problem would be the establishment of six general (flag) officer billets for cryptologic careerists, two for each service, of which one each would be in the Service cryptologic activity and one in NSA. It will be desirable on occasion to fill some of these billets by non-careerists, in which case the cryptologic general (flag) officers so displaced should be assigned temporarily to related fields such as intelligence and communications. Along with this, selection

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procedures should be so established that cryptologic career officers will not be penalized by choice of this career field in promotions through the grade of O-6. In addition to the establishment of an officer cryptologic career program, the designation of the Army Security Agency and the Navy Security Group as major service commands would be advantageous. I feel that the AFSS which is so designated has a considerable advantage over the other two service cryptologic agencies. I am concerned, also, over the attitude which I have sensed, at least as regards our service, that NSA is outside of and foreign to the military community, and that officers who have completed a loyally-performed tour of duty with the Agency must demonstrate their "de-NSA-ization" prior to full acceptance back into their parent military service. The direct effect within NSA of the failure of the military services to establish and promote cryptologic professionalism as a military career is that I do not have a sufficient number of qualified and experienced officers.

(3) Another vitally important aspect of this military career problem is that of the enlisted technician. I am firmly convinced that the major contribution to the solution of our field collection and analysis problem lies in the development and retention of professional COMINT enlisted personnel, in the same way and to the same degree that professional civilians are required to solve the technical COMINT problems of the headquarters establishment. Although data as to the rate of COMINT re-enlistments are not available, the over-all is probably below 20 percent for all three Services. It is a calamitous fact that the re-enlistment rate of Army intercept operators at present is less than one percent. In my opinion, the single major step most likely to contribute materially to the solution of this problem is the establishment of specific cryptologic

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career ladders and of an advancement program beginning with the E 1 grade and progressing through E 7 and W 1 to the rank of W 4 for service technicians. The technician grade structure of each service cryptologic agency should resemble an inverted pyramid of enlisted grades, on top of which stands a smaller pyramid of warrant officer grades, similarly inverted and balanced. Ideally, the number of E 7 and E 6 technicians in the COMINT field should vastly exceed the number of E 1's and E 2's. Advancement should depend entirely on individual ability, not on vacancies. From the E 7 ranks, outstanding individuals would be made warrant officers. Here again, advancement through the WO grades would depend solely on demonstrated competence, not vacancies. The ideal result would be many more E 7's than E 1's, over a period of time. If in addition to this grade structure, the living accommodations and recreational facilities accorded COMINT technicians were improved as an inverse function of the undesirability of the location to which they are assigned, and travel of families were facilitated to the greatest possible degree, it is felt that a much greater degree of professionalism could be obtained over a period of years. I plan to take this matter up through the Service cryptologic agencies at an early date, and may request your assistance in establishing inverted pyramid grade structures. I believe that such a program can be carried out without derogation to other arms, in which T/D or TO & R type organizations, with hazardous duty pay where appropriate, can equitably continue.

g. Your questions under this category are symptomatic of basic questions of policy which have plagued the cryptologic services since before World War II.

*staff*

(1) ESSID-9, is keynoted by one statement, which, I believe, explains the President's motivation in taking the action which led to creation in their present form of the Special Committee for COMINT, USCIB and NSA. The

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statement is "... that the communications intelligence (COMINT) activities of the United States are a national responsibility, and that they must be so organized and managed as to exploit to the maximum the available resources in all participating departments and agencies and to satisfy the legitimate intelligence requirements of all such departments and agencies ..." From this I conclude that the overriding consideration in formulating an NSA personnel policy must be to insure an organization of maximum effectiveness. An organization of maximum effectiveness requires competent personnel in all important jobs.

57e) Accordingly, I am operating on the principle, etc., from paragraph g (10).

(2) There are members of my organization and the intelligence community who hold variously that NSA is a military organization, that it is a civilian organization, or that it must be established which it is. I hold no brief for any of these views. From a study of NSCID-9 and the structure of the Special Committee and USCIB, I conclude that NSA is an organization commanded by a Lt. General and established within the Department of Defense, but in all other respects is to be balanced as precisely as possible at the mid-point between military and civilian status. In view of this, my policy outlined above must be tempered to require that, to the fullest degree compatible with the selection of competent personnel for all jobs, an even balance should be maintained between military and civilian employees in jobs of all types and at all levels in NSA. Also, whenever possible, a military/civilian or civilian/military pair should act as principal and deputy in each important position. For this reason, the military or civilian status of candidates for a vacancy is often an important consideration in selection.

(3) I will, more often than not, select a military candidate from a group of equally qualified people available to fill any given vacancy. This is

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particularly true when, of those equally qualified, none is fully qualified for the vacancy. In addition, it has proved necessary on occasion to fill vacancies, for which no fully qualified person is available, with a military person when a better qualified civilian employee is available. I wish to emphasize, however, that I have never knowingly selected a less well qualified military person to fill a vacancy for which a fully qualified civilian employee was available. I do not consider that these actions which may appear biased in favor of military people are contradictory with my expressed policy. On the contrary, I feel they are necessary in recognition of certain practical considerations which I must face up to:

- (a) Because of their much less frequent rotation to field duties, civilian employees (1) are present when vacancies occur in NSA more frequently than comparable military personnel, (2) have a better opportunity to qualify for the vacancies which occur, and (3) have a much more permanent job tenure in duties to which they are assigned than do comparable military people.
- (b) Unlike civilian employees, an individual's military rank does not increase as a result of selection for a job vacancy in NSA.
- (c) Because of tenure and rank considerations outlined above, the damage caused to the organization by a military misassignment is ordinarily less serious and less enduring than that caused by a mistake in selection of a civilian for an important job.

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- (d) In implementation of the policy outlined in subparagraph g (1), even tempered as it is by the observations made in subparagraph g (2), there exists a strong long-range tendency toward a large majority of important jobs being filled by civilian employees. This tendency must be opposed and slowed to the degree consistent with selection of competent people.

4. Other important considerations relating to this general problem are itemized below:

a. As you are aware, when AFSA was created by the merger of ASA and OSA in the winter of 1949 (the AFSS not then really existing), ASA operations were <sup>conducted</sup> almost entirely by civilian employees, while the reverse was true of OSA. The result of this was the the jockeying for position between agencies at the time of the merger carried with it the seeds of a sort of military versus civilian contest which has not yet been eliminated. ASA, which had successfully agitated for the merger, was content to rest on this victory and to obtain for its employees a dominant role in actual operations by filling a majority of the positions wherein management of a COMINT operating unit or COMSEC or Research and Development function was involved. OSA, in turn, willingly coded a majority of such operational jobs in return for a major share of top-level operational management (particularly COMINT) and policy billets. The imbalance which resulted at the several levels of management <sup>has been</sup> is not easy to correct in a short period of time and continues with us to a considerable degree, even though Army and Air Force officers have attained a position of approximate equality by relief of Naval officers in a number of jobs originally held by the OSA component. This

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disbalance is in addition to that which results from other considerations outlined in subparagraph g (3), above.

b. Outstanding, young officers of O-5 and O-6 rank, particularly the latter, who are likely candidates for general or flag rank, should be brought in small numbers for three year tours. These men will be broadened by the assignment, will bring NSA an awareness of service operational problems and concepts, and can assist in selling NSA later in their careers. ✓

c. Outstanding COMINT officers of all grades should serve regular tours of duty with operational commands as well as in service intelligence duties and COMINT field stations, for the same reasons as in a, above. ✓

d. Competent junior officers of the several services, experienced in ordnance, tactics, communications, intelligence, counter-intelligence, etc., should be assigned to NSA for the benefit to be gained by their employment as technical advisors in reverse, i.e., technical experts in a phase of military endeavor advisory to COMINT technicians managing operational problems. ✓

e. Prolonged tours and training programs should be scheduled in NSA for officers whose seniority would otherwise dictate their assignment to key jobs for which they are technically unqualified and in which their employment is therefore detrimental to the Agency. These devices enable the utilization by NSA of such officers without detriment to their service careers or the Agency.

f. Continued provision must be made for promotion to the highest civilian grades of outstanding technicians having skills of vital importance to NSA but who are unqualified for senior policy or management positions.

g. The ever present tendency toward COMINT endeavor for its own sake must be combated by this inter-assignment of personnel with the intelligence services and operational commands so that the objective of the organization, the production of that end product which is needed by the user, is always kept clearly in mind.

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5. I do not feel that changes in military-civilian relationships in NSA are desirable, and do not recommend a change in established policies. I do feel that these policies could be better implemented, and will continue to make every effort to this end. The principal continuing obstacle which I face, however, is an insufficiency of fully qualified people of all types and grades, both military and civilian.

6. One further item of importance in achieving cryptologic professionalism which was not mentioned in your memorandum relates to the severe loss faced by the cryptologic agencies in coming years of regular military officers, both temporary and permanent. Many of these will have an invaluable background of up to twenty years experience in cryptologic operations. Especially in the case of those officers of O-6 rank who must retire for non-promotion after 30 or <sup>more</sup> 31 years of active commissioned service, they represent a potential which should be usable, and of great value, to this Agency, for a number of years to come. I am at present unable to attract them by an offer of civilian employment. Even under the proposed legislation which liberalizes public laws \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ which, if enacted, would permit them to waive retired pay and accept full civil service pay, the total compensation thus afforded would not be sufficiently greater than their retired pay alone to attract them. Any solution to this problem, which already exists, and will loom larger in the future, would be of welcome help.

7. The foregoing, although lengthy, is only a superficial treatment of these items which you raised. I shall keep you informed of developments along this line. I greatly appreciate your interest in these problems and your offer of assistance. I shall ask your assistance from time to time on specific problems which are beyond my power to solve.

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