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and No.NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON

Op-20

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24 May 1938.

From: Rear Admiral C.E. Courtney, U.S. Navy.
To: Chief of Naval Operations.

SUBJECT: Minutes of Subcommittee on State, War, and Navy
Department Communications.

1. The Subcommittee on State, War, and Navy Department Communications met at 10:30 a.m. this date in the Office of the Director of Naval Communications.

Present:

Rear Admiral C.E. Courtney, U.S.N., Navy Department,
Senior Member.

Mr. D.A. Salmon, State Department,
Major V.O. Reeder, U.S.A., War Department,
Members.

Commander L.F. Safford, U.S.N., Navy Department,
Lieutenant P.V. Mercer, U.S.N., Navy Department,
Technical Advisors.

2. Each member was furnished a copy of the minutes of the meetings for 17 May and 23 May 1938, and after general discussion these minutes were approved.

3. The Subcommittee then adjourned at 11:15, having completed the duties for which it was appointed.

C.E. Courtney.

Major Reeder REF ID: A67380

This page replaces pages
3 and 4 of the minutes
for 17 May 1938.

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6. Mr. Salmon stated that although common standards of security were doubtless desired in principle and might be practicable between the Army and Navy, the State Department's problems were so different that they could not possibly agree to a common standard. Messages in which other departments were interested were another matter and he thought the State Department could agree to anything proposed by the Army and Navy. We should be able to iron out our difficulties in regard to secrecy classification and precedence of messages. The Treasury Department also to be included in the distribution of this new cipher system as consuls frequently have to communicate with Coast Guard cutters in regard to narcotic and liquor smuggling, and there were other occasions when Coast Guard vessels would find this cipher very useful.

7. Commander Safford stated the Navy Department already had the facilities for the production of alphabets and key lists for the proposed system and that the Navy Department would be willing to print the first two editions; subsequent editions could be left to the future. The Navy Department would prepare the manuscripts and submit them directly to the other two Departments for inspection and approval.

8. A general discussion then followed and the following decisions were reached:

(1) Each Department furnish its instructions relative to security classification and precedence of messages to the other two Departments. Each Department would make an independent study and submit a proposal for uniform phraseology.

(2) To adopt a common cipher for interdepartmental communications between the State, War, Navy, and Treasury Departments, distribution going down to destroyers and gunboats of the Navy and Coast Guard cutters. The question of the exact distribution of this system and whether to make a second cipher of limited distribution to be deferred for the time being. The Navy to undertake preparation and printing of the alphabets and key lists for the new system and to start without delay in order to meet the completion of the physical apparatus which had been ordered for the State Department.

9. The Subcommittee then adjourned at 12:15 to reconvene at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 23, 1938, in the Office of the Director of Naval Communications.

C.E. Courtney.