

SECRET//COMINT//X1**(U) CRYPTOLOGIC ALMANAC****(U) SIGINT Support to the White House**

(U) Providing SIGINT support to any customer is a complex, challenging task. It is especially challenging if that customer is the president of the U.S. Although the White House Situation Room originated in the 1960s, its development illustrates some cardinal rules of model SIGINT support that are still valid today. These rules include selecting appropriate information, maintaining enough flexibility to meet changing individual needs, and timely delivery of SIGINT.

(U) Presidents traditionally received SIGINT indirectly through the military intelligence system or through CIA. In 1958, during the Eisenhower administration, the Criticomm system was proposed to ensure that any information "indicating a situation or pertaining to a situation which affects the security or interests of the U.S. to such an extent that it may require the immediate attention of the president and other members of the National Security Council must get to the president within ten minutes of recognition that it meets Critic criteria."

(U) During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the Soviets placed offensive missiles in Cuba, merely ninety miles away from the U.S., President Kennedy came to understand the value of SIGINT. SIGINT alerted the president about the posture of Soviet forces. He had ordered a naval blockade of Cuba, and before any official pronouncements from Soviet premier Khrushchev, Kennedy knew from SIGINT that the Soviet ships advancing toward Cuba had turned back.

(U) Because of his experience during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy was determined that the White House have direct access to SIGINT. Kennedy wanted more information in addition to Critics. Consequently, the Kennedy administration drew up the plans for the White House Situation Room. Unfortunately, Kennedy did not live to see his plans come to fruition, but he achieved his goal of direct access to SIGINT for the White House. On-time delivery of SIGINT improved with the opening of the White House Situation Room during the Johnson administration.

(U) The White House Situation Room is a twenty-four-hour watch office located in the basement of the White House. Analysts who work in the Situation Room receive all sources of intelligence in order to prepare briefings for the national security adviser, members of the National Security Council, and the president. The recollections of David McManus, the second NSA liaison officer to the White House and the first NSA employee to become the director of the White House Situation Room, presents an interesting picture of Situation Room operations.

~~(S//SI)~~ David McManus was the NSA liaison officer to the White House from 1966 to 1969. He

believed that SIGINT support to the president was effective because NSA filtered the information that it sent to the Situation Room. McManus explained: "As a liaison officer, one of my duties was to gather SIGINT requirements from the White House. Critics automatically flow to the White House so the question was what else did the White House need? We tried to provide personal support by selecting items. We kept the number between one hundred and two hundred per day because we did not want to overburden the system. By making the White House a hand-written addressee on messages, we were also able to keep track of what information we sent to them. This hand selection of items made NSA support to the White House very effective."

(U) As a liaison officer, McManus started going to the White House once a week. Due to expanding needs such as the Vietnam War and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, McManus soon began making that trip daily.

(U) In 1969 McManus became director of the White House Situation Room and held the position until 1974. McManus's experiences demonstrate that a greater level of flexibility is sometimes required for effective customer support. He served both the Johnson and Nixon administrations, which meant he had to change his procedures to meet individual management styles. McManus offered the following description:

~~(S//SI)~~ "Both the Johnson and Nixon administrations were avid consumers of SIGINT. The style of the presidents and their national security advisers was very different. President Johnson took the direct approach. He wanted to be personally called about every Critic. He was always on the phone asking for battle updates, casualty reports, and other information about the Vietnam War. We had difficulties meeting the president's demands because the military always gave us ten times more information than we wanted. Johnson frequently came to the Situation Room to ponder over SIGINT himself. He became consumed with the war. He went so far as to issue orders to field commanders on where they should locate their troops.

(U) "Walt Rostow, national security adviser during the Johnson administration, also took a personal approach. His office was down in the west wing side of the basement close to the Situation Room. The Situation Room was his first stop each morning when he came to work at 6:30 AM. We gave him a personal briefing on events as well as the traditional written briefing with item summaries. He and the duty officers were on a first-name basis. He had a voracious appetite for SIGINT.

(U) "President Nixon and his national security adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger, were more aloof. Dr. Kissinger quickly abandoned the office that Rostow had occupied. He moved his office away from us, out of the basement, to the first floor to be closer to the president. Briefing materials for the president went through Dr. Kissinger. If we received a Critic, we called Kissinger, not the president. Fortunately, Kissinger lived close to the White House, about ten to fifteen minutes away. There were many times when I jumped into a staff car to bring Kissinger significant information in the middle of the night."

(U) Delivering information to the appropriate White House official in a timely fashion was of

paramount importance. McManus reported that if something really important came in, they would hand-carry it to the national security adviser. When the flood of information was extremely great, McManus directed the staff to write wrap-up reports two or three times a day instead of the traditional once a day.

(U) McManus described his time at the White House as both rewarding and exhausting. He was at the White House for six and a half years. Mc- Manus reported: "I wore a pager continually for five and a half years. The telephone by my bed literally rang every night. My colleagues were very junior. They did not have the confidence to call Kissinger or the president. They always called me first. My time at the White House was certainly a high point of my career, but when I left in 1974, it was time for me to go home to NSA."

[(U//~~FOUO~~) Sharon A. Maneki, Center for Cryptologic History, 972-2893s, samanek@nsa]

Derived From: NSA/CSS Manual 128-2
dated 24 February 1998
~~Declassify On: X1~~

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