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Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

The Creation of NSA - Part 2 of 3: The Brownell Committee

(U) **SYNOPSIS:** After World War II, the Army and Navy cryptologic organizations sought to eliminate duplication of effort and surmount budget difficulties by forming a cooperative organization, the Joint Operating Plan. However, the JOP administrator did not have sufficient authority to achieve these goals. A later attempt at unification, the Armed Forces Security Agency, did well in intelligence production, but failed to achieve the savings expected of it. It also failed to bring the Service Cryptologic Agencies into closer cooperation.

(U) **NOW, ON WITH THE STORY:** The senior military leaders fighting the war in Korea were also dissatisfied with AFSA. All had been senior leaders during World War II and had had access to the high-level decrypts from German or Japanese communications. When they did not receive equivalent materials concerning their enemies in Korea, they erroneously concluded that AFSA was not doing its job adequately.

(U) Among the dissatisfied leaders of the civilian agencies were Dean Acheson, the secretary of state, and Walter Bedell Smith, director of Central Intelligence. Smith, as Eisenhower's deputy in World War II, had learned well how to achieve his goals in the face of bureaucratic reluctance or interservice rivalry. He also met frequently "one-on-one" with Harry Truman.

(U) Acheson and Smith were two of the most influential figures in the Truman administration. They joined in goading the president into new directions with COMINT.

(U) In response to this dissatisfaction with AFSA, President Harry S Truman on 13 December 1951 wielded the great all-purpose bureaucratic tool: he ordered a study to determine corrective measures. His directive was issued to Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett, who further entrusted this responsibility to a committee chaired by George Brownell.

(U) George A. Brownell was a prominent New York attorney who had served as a consultant to the State Department and traveled as President Truman's personal representative to a number of nations, including Mexico. Serving with him on the committee were Charles E. Bohlen of the State Department, Brigadier General John B.

Magruder, USA (Ret.), and William H. Jackson, Special Assistant to the DCI. Note that no representative of the JCS, under whom AFSA was placed organizationally, served on the committee.

(U) This quartet changed the shape of the U.S. COMINT community.

(U) For six months, housed at the CIA, the Brownell Committee consulted documents, heard testimony from AFSA and the services, and conferred with experts. Based on these, the Committee issued a lengthy report on 13 June 1952.

(U) The Brownell Report was highly critical of the definition of the responsibilities of the director of AFSA and the allocation of means. The report was particularly disparaging about the methods for determining priorities, showing marked concern over the persistence of uncoordinated Army and Air force COMINT activities in the Korean Conflict. The report noted real duplication among the services and between the services and AFSA.

(U) Finally, the Brownell Committee recognized COMINT as a national asset, a resource for the government as a whole. COMINT, it said, had to be organized and managed to reflect this concept.

(U) The Committee proposed that AFSA be made the keystone of government COMINT activities, and that the director be invested with stronger powers. The Brownell recommendations were designed to leave military COMINT agencies in a position to meet military support requirements, but in conjunction with, not apart from, representatives of the civilian intelligence units.

(U) As the nonmilitary agencies were averse to continued military domination of COMINT, as they saw it, the Brownell Committee provided for subordination to the secretary of defense and fore-stalled any inclination to place NSA, like AFSA, under the JCS.

(U) Not surprisingly, the then AFSA director, General Ralph Canine, said the Brownell Committee report contained "eminently sound conclusions."

(U) AFSA was redesignated the National Security Agency, without change in personnel, funds, or facilities. The director of the new organization, however, was given solid authority over COMINT resources in the Defense Department.

(U) When the Joint Chiefs created the Armed Forces Security Agency, they had entrusted to it responsibility for producing cryptographic equipment and material, and for coordinating the R&D of COMSEC equipment into one, nonduplicative program. While

the struggle which transformed AFSA into NSA revolved around the control of COMINT resources, NSA also inherited AFSA's COMSEC responsibility.

(U) A large share of credit for strengthening the central cryptologic organization must go to the last DIRAFSA / first DIRNSA, MG Ralph J. Canine, who succeeded Admiral Stone in 1952. Although not a professional intelligence officer per se, he was tough, and when he knew what he wanted, he surely got it. The general stood firm on a central organization and a directorate with sufficient authority over collection, processing, and dissemination.

(U) In a real sense, the Joint Operating Plan and AFSA could be considered laboratories of centralization in which the services experimented with differing degrees of centralized COMINT activities to discover what worked and what did not. One of the architects of centralization, Rear Admiral Joseph Wenger, made this comment:

I firmly believe that had it not been for the invaluable experience we gained under the joint coordinating plan in effect prior to the creation of AFSA and in the operation of the latter agency we would have had far more trouble in solving the early problems incident to NSA's establishment than was actually the case. At the beginning of NSA's existence we at least knew, fairly certainly, what had to be done.

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