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Item 4

STATUS REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN BY
THE DIRECTOR, NSA, TO IMPROVE COMSEC
IN THE COMINT ELEMENTS UNDER HIS
OPERATIONAL OR TECHNICAL CONTROLBACKGROUND

1. In August 1953 the Executive Secretary, USCIB, expressed concern over the high percentage of COMINT compromises due to ineffective communications security. He recommended that the Director, NSA, be instructed by USCIB to take certain specific actions, including inspections if necessary, to remedy the situation (USCIB 13/358).

2. Subsequent papers recommended elimination of the inspection clause from the Executive Secretary's proposed draft. Instead, the Director, NSA, would be requested to establish and submit for Board approval minimum standards governing communications security systems, procedures, practices and training programs to be followed by all USCIB members in the transmission of COMINT by electrical means.

3. On 4 February 1954 USCIB approved a new Directive #9 "Instructions for Reporting Compromises and Possible Compromises of COMINT Information and of COMINT Code Words."

4. On 8 July 1954 USCIB approved (USCIB 13.5/42) the "minimum standards" paper submitted by Director, NSA, entitled "Security Requirements for Transmission of COMINT by Electrical Means."

5. In his annual report to USCIB (USCIB 5.4/12) the Executive Secretary recommended that the Director, NSA, prepare and forward to USCIB in time for consideration at the September meeting a status report on action taken to improve communications security in the COMINT elements under his operational or technical control, together with any recommendations he might deem appropriate.

CURRENT CONSIDERATION

6. USCIB 13.5/81 circulates for USCIB consideration the Status Report submitted by NSA.

7. In a covering memorandum it is pointed out that, while encryption errors and equipment failures are relatively frequent, more than half of all compromises of COMINT information continue to involve transmission in the clear on interceptible wire or radio circuits. In addition, a high percentage of these clear text transmissions are due directly to inattention or carelessness on the part of the operators.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~100TH USCIB Meeting~~TOP SECRET~~

Item 4 (continued)

8. The memorandum states that, since improvements in equipments and procedures alone have not resulted in the desired improvement of the situation, preventive and corrective action in the future should place increased and continued emphasis on specific guides and criteria for training and indoctrination of personnel, and on the basic responsibility of command to develop in subordinates a deep sense of personal responsibility for the maintenance of security.

9. The report reveals that the hazard to security as a result of inadvertent plainlanguage transmissions was recognized and brought to the attention of the Service Cryptologic Agencies by the Director in July 1951. Since that time, various equipment modifications and other corrective media have been recommended. Some of these were immediately adopted by one or more of the Services; others have not yet been fully implemented. In the meantime, the violations continue at a high rate; and increased emphasis on training appears to be the main solution.

10. The memorandum states that prosecution of a successful training program will require the exercise of strict administrative control, and that the authority to exercise such control resides in the Director under the terms of NSCID #9. It is, nevertheless, the Director's intention not to assume direct administrative control at this time, but to continue to act through and in collaboration with the Services. The success of the cooperative effort in training, and the promptness of Service cooperation in adopting future recommendations for the improvement of communications security, will determine whether or not the Director should consider the exercise of more direct control.

11. In addition to establishing specific training criteria, the Director contemplates the following additional corrective action:

a. Issue of check-off lists covering all phases of communication security, to be used in the conduct of periodic local inspections of field stations by the Commanding Officer or Officer in Charge. Reports of these inspections will be submitted to NSA.

b. Notification to the Service Field Activities that NSA is prepared to provide, on request, Training Visit Teams for the conduct of informal, instructional visits to field stations.

RECOMMENDATION

12. No recommendation required on this item.

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