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USCIB: 13.5/66

20 May 1954

~~SECRET~~MEMORANDUM FOR THE MEMBERS OF USCIB:

Subject: Possible Compromise of COMINT Information.

1. Enclosure 1 hereto is a copy of a manuscript submitted for review prior to publication. The author is a free lance writer who apparently has never been in the Armed Forces nor had any official connection with COMINT. The information in the manuscript, although inaccurate in many respects, is near enough to the truth in some respects to constitute a revelation of certain past progress and processes in the COMINT field.

2. Enclosure 2 is an extract from the record of an interview with the above mentioned author. The interview was conducted in an effort to persuade him to withhold publication of his manuscript. Said effort appears to have been successful thus far.

3. If the COMINT nature of Enclosure 1 is granted on the basis of the description of content set forth above, a full reading of it may not be worth the members' time. It might, nevertheless be worth the time of their principal staff assistants for COMINT matters.

4. It is, however, earnestly recommended that each member take the time to read Enclosure 2 in its entirety. It is believed that in addition to being found amusing, Enclosure 2 will be found to emphasize the hard lesson that the only way to achieve security is to maintain absolute secrecy. Enclosure 2, whether or not completely true, constitutes an excellent example of the methods by which unwise declassification, public pronouncements, unguarded talk and a fertile imagination can be combined to produce a damaging aggregate.

5. This matter has been under consideration by the National Security Agency, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the FBI, the Navy Member and the Executive Secretary since last January. No information upon which to base action other than as indicated herein has been developed.

Enclosures

1. Manuscript "The Pentagon's Favorite Magicians" by John Tiger.
2. OSD Report of Interview dtd 11 Mar 1954.



RUFUS L. TAYLOR
Captain, U. S. Navy
Executive Secretary, USCIB

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THE PENTAGON'S FAVORITE MAGICIANS

by

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Enclosure 1 with USCIB 13.5/66 dtd 20 May 1954.

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You didn't read about it in the newspapers. Disturbed by Whitaker Chambers' pumpkin microfilms and alarmed by authoritative reports that the late President Roosevelt himself felt enemy agents could easily crack the State Department's old fashioned ciphers, one of those inquisitive Senate Committees called on Army Intelligence for an expert evaluation of Uncle Sam's present codes. The worried legislators wanted to talk to the top brain, a former civilian who became a colonel in 1942 and still wears those silver eagles. After considerable reflection and some wrangling, G-2 agreed to produce him for testimony in executive session. The public and all journalists must be barred. As he slipped into the Senate Office Building, armed guards politely but firmly explained to the indignant Capitol Hill press corps that there would be no stories, no pictures. Colonel X, the shadowy figure who guides the Pentagon's efficient code busters, was a top secret national military asset.

He still is. Where did he come from in the black limousine? From an elegant girls finishing school in nearby Virginia, an establishment which had become even more exclusive when military intelligence bought it in 1942 and redecorated with barbed wire fences and machinegun posts. Whom did he work for? The Army Security Agency, America's most hush-hush organization. It rarely gets into the papers. Its budget is never published, and even Congressmen don't talk about it. Few taxpayers have ever heard of it, but it is this secret unit which is working around the clock on decoding intercepted foreign messages. This information plays a vital part in guiding the decisions of the top-level National Security Council, in determining basic moves for the defense of the free world.

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MAGIC - 2

Colonel X has a splendid background for this important post. He was a "magician." He did some wonderful tricks, stunts that may have saved your life. One of the key American secrets of the Second World War was Operation Magic, cover name assigned to the patient team of soldiers and civilian experts who broke the Japanese code. Army intelligence was reading Nipponese messages long before December 7, 1941, and it was only poor communications between Washington and Hawaii which prevented a warning from reaching Pearl Harbor in time. Hundreds of G-2's quiz kids cursed, calculated and considered enemy intercepts relayed to those closely guarded buildings in Arlington, Va.; they fought the silent battles.

Dozens of special Security agents were protecting "Magic," and it was one of the best kept secrets of the war. Although G-2, the Office of Naval Intelligence, and the free-wheeling cloak and dagger gang called the Office of Strategic Services were supposed to cooperate closely, General "Wild Bill" Donovan's uninhibited O.S.S. lads hadn't heard that the Army's "Magicians" had cracked the Japanese code. It was that secret. One dark night in 1944 in neutral Lisbon, an O.S.S. squad slipped into the Nipponese Embassy and coolly cracked the safe containing the code book and other top secret documents. When word of this bold exploit reached Washington and Tokyo, men screamed and tore their hair in both capitals. The Japs were hysterical that their master code was in enemy hands. The weary men of "Magic" were enraged, for now the war Lords of Nippon would devise a new code which might take months of skull splitting to break. Thousands of lives might be lost in the interim.

Fortunately, the old fashioned military minds of the professional Japanese officers saved the day. Like all good soldiers, the Nipponese had been fully prepared for such an eventuality.

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MAGIC - 3

Imperial Headquarters immediately sent out a new code to all units, transmitting it to outlying commands by radio in THE OLD CODE! The harried "Magicians" breathed a deep sigh of relief, as did the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon, and went ahead reading the enemy messages.

It was no cinch, for the Japanese used a four-digit book code. Each Nipponese headquarters had a copy of a special book in which there were numbers from 1 to 9999 and almost as many words. Each number signified a certain word. 446 might mean "mortar" or 1153 "dive bomber." Without the book you were lost. This was far different from the ciphers used by lower echelon Japanese field units, comparatively elemental systems which experienced technicians can break on the basis of established frequencies of recurrence for each letter of the alphabet. In English for example, the letter "E" shows up most often. You can test this yourself on any paragraph or page of this magazine. Once you determine the language being utilized, you can start testing by checking the frequency with which various letters, numbers or symbols appear in the messages and matching these results to the letters most common in that tongue. Experienced code men can soon detect "nulls" too, for one popular trick is to insert meaningless symbols to confuse enemy cryptographers. These were World War I techniques.

The Japanese book code was a helluva lot nastier, and we can all thank our lucky stars and stripes that Uncle Sam had a small nucleus of trained men to handle it. Our specialists had come a long way since the famous Black Chamber, a competent group which also broke the Nipponese diplomatic code in the twenties before it was dissolved by a high minded Secretary of State who felt that it wasn't cricket to read your neighbors' mail.

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MAGIC - 4

An old fashioned thoroughbred of good family, he was naively sincere in his conviction that gentlemen don't do that sort of thing. He'd forgotten the global intelligence network of our polite British cousins, a superbly quiet but efficient system which played a major part in construction of the far-flung empire.

This refined restraint was tossed to the winds when pressing demands of World War II filled O.S.S., G-2, and even O.N.I. with a strange collection of assorted anthropologists, wrestlers, Wall Street lawyers, safe-crackers, mathematicians, demolition experts, geologists, forgers, newspapermen and other screwballs. Wenches in Washington, London, Algiers, Madrid, Stockholm, Istanbul, Karachi and a dozen other cities will no doubt concur with the findings of Hitler's espionage chief, the late Admiral Wilhelm Canaris of Abwehr Oberkommando, that they were no gentlemen but they got things done. Of course, they had plenty of money and the right equipment.

There were special costly machines for the code cracking teams, secret devices designed by U. S. and European engineers. These gadgets clattered away day and night as the busy brains at Arlington Hall sifted out messages intercepted by distant combat units. America's strategists knew most of the enemy's moves in the Pacific in advance. Our planning for the decisive Battle of Midway, the Japanese Navy's last great threat to Hawaii and California, was based on a message decoded by the "Magicians." Information from the canny code-busters enabled our fighter planes to shoot down the transport carrying the top admiral of the Imperial Fleet right over a Nipponese air base in the South Pacific.

By 1945, massed formations of B-29's from Saipan, Guam and Tinian were smashing at the home islands of Japan daily and attack bombers from swift

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MAGIC - 5

carrier task forces were swooping in frequently with punishing raids. It takes a lot of planning to put up a carrier strike or a big B-29 raid, and one vital factor is the weather. Thousands of airmen's lives were involved. We had to get accurate weather data, so small groups of hand picked meteorologists were flown into Outer Mongolia to report their observations by radio. But a lot of the weather over Japan drifts across and down from Siberia, where our Soviet Allies have long maintained an extensive network of meteorological stations. As Uncle Sam had already contributed tens of thousands of planes and trucks, guns and ships, as well as vast quantities of other supplies to help the Red Army, it was obvious that Big Joe would be glad to reciprocate by handing over this information.

But it was no deal. The Russians thought of a hundred reasons not to play ball. They stalled and delayed for weeks. They just didn't trust us. They were suspicious. Maybe they remembered the U. S. military expedition which helped the anti-Bolsheviks in Siberia in 1919; perhaps they were simply afraid of the unknown capitalist world. In any case, they wouldn't play ball. American commanders exhausted their patience and finally called in our intelligence men. They discovered that weather data was broadcast to Soviet planes several times daily from airfields near Vladivostock. The solution was obvious but dangerous. U. S. code experts were secretly dropped into remote posts where they could intercept these messages, crack them, and relay the vital information to our air generals waiting to strike from the Mariannas. With the assistance of these nervy and skillful code-busters, our brass knew what the weather would be over Tokyo before the Imperial Staff did. The anonymous men who cracked the Russian weather code made a healthy contribution to the successful bombing of Japan.

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MAGIC - 6

A few months before the end of the war, the Soviet Military Mission in Washington notified the War Department that it had "learned" that we had broken the most important Japanese code. Exactly how the Russians found out remains a mystery, although a stupid reporter for a Chicago daily had hinted as much in his story on the victory at Midway. There was probably a certain amount of loose talk in spite of the unceasing vigils of a hundred special security agents. I've never forgotten how a Harvard chemistry instructor casually told me about the A-bomb a year before it devastated Hiroshima. G-2's alarm over the breach in "Magic" secrecy was mollified somewhat when the Red Army spokesmen announced that their experts had also found the true meanings of many numbers, and they offered to swap. Ten for ten. It sounded fair enough.

Although the men of "Magic" had many hundreds of the numbers worked out, some of them via skillful interrogation of captured Nipponese code clerks, G-2 was naturally interested in getting as many as possible. It wouldn't cost us anything for the Russians were allies already committed to join the war on Japan, and we'd probably secure some useful stuff which might aid fighting men in the field. A secret rendezvous was fixed, and your able Uncle sent a colonel and a first louie with 100 numbers to barter. The Soviet delegation was two full colonels, complete with fur caps and red shoulderboards on their dress uniforms. The senior U. S. officer spoke first. After introducing himself and his aide, he read out ten numbers and their actual meaning in calm firm tones.

Then one of the Red Army colonels replied. He mentioned the will for peace and freedom of the great Soviet people, the common struggle against the Axis, and the mutual benefits of wholehearted cooperation.

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MAGIC - 7

After this five minute preamble, he got down to business. The G-2 colonel wrote down the numbers supplied in exchange, then gave the Russians another ten.

After each side had presented thirty numbers, the alert young lieutenant called his commanding officer aside and showed him the check list. Of the thirty given by the Russians, fourteen were already on our lists. More important, our cooperative Allies had supplied WRONG WORDS for eight of the fourteen! Whether it was a deliberate trick, a test to see what they could get away with, a bargaining device to buy cheaply, or just the result of poor intelligence work by the Soviets wasn't clear. But it was plain that the swap wouldn't profit Uncle Sam. Only Big Joe would be ahead.

Barely concealing his disturbance and bitterness, the Yankee colonel announced that his aide had carelessly left the other papers back at the Pentagon so the meeting must be recessed. He would telephone the Russians to set a date for another exchange. When the master "Magicians" heard his report, they shrugged and ordered the barter deal to stop at once. These old pros knew that you can't trust anybody in the crazy, complex, cut-throat game of international espionage. It was unfortunate, but we just couldn't count on our dear Soviet chums. They wanted to play it cute. The G-2 colonel never called the Russian military mission, and he wasn't surprised that the Red Army officers didn't telephone to ask why.

Uncle Sam's intelligence services and code-cracking teams were hit hard by the demobilization of skilled manpower in 1946, and O.S.S. was actually split. The research and analysis men were bundled off to the State Department, while operational agents found themselves attached to the new Strategic Services Unit of the Army.

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MAGIC - 8

It didn't work very well. By 1947, the Central Intelligence Agency was created to collect information and evaluate data gathered by G-2, O.N.I., A-2 (Air Force), and State Department experts at home and abroad. In the same year the Army Security Agency was established with a minimum of noise.

C.I.A., which is spiritual heir to hard-hitting O.S.S., and the other intelligence agencies lean heavily on the highly trained, enthusiastically anonymous code-busters - practical men who shun publicity like the bubonic plague. G-2 worked hard to keep "Magic" a secret, and refused to hire famous Black Chamber veterans lest enemy agents trail them to the hideout in Virginia. The security lid is on even tighter today, and it's going to stay that way. Little is known of the size of the Security Agency staff, for many employees are under strict orders to pretend that they work for other Pentagon units. It's at least a thousand men and women, soldiers and civilians, and perhaps two thousand would be closer.

Quite a few of the code experts were drawn from "Magic", and they know their business. There can be little doubt that they're beating their heads and matching their wits against the Russian cryptographers today, hammering away at codes that Hitler's smartest intelligence teams barely dented. The Soviets have a simple system. They change their codes frequently. Red Army units during World War II were supplied with loose-leaf books containing hundreds of different ciphers. Each day a number was broadcast, indicating which was to be used. Then when the next code was announced, yesterday's page was torn out and burned. This method is almost impossible to beat.

It has never been revealed how G-2 broke the Japanese codes during the second World War. One report declared that a Nipponese coding machine was secretly duplicated, and another rumor intimated that there were American spies high in government circles in Tokyo.

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MAGIC - 9

There hasn't been a whisper about the techniques being used by the Army Security Agency today. On May 15, 1950 President Truman signed a law which provided penalties of ten years in federal penitentiary or \$10,000 fine for revealing either that the U. S. has cracked a foreign code or information that would permit a foreign government to read our coded messages.

Behind this veil of law, lead and barbed wire, the fabulous "Magicians" are back at work, trying to pull critical rabbits out of that big black hat for the hard-boiled Joint Chiefs of Staff. But don't ask the mysterious Colonel X how they do those incredible tricks. You know what magicians always say, "It's a secret!"

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"MR. BLANK: Will you tell us your full name and your address, Mr. Wager?"

MR. WAGER: Sure. Walter H. Wager. H. stands for Herman. And the address is Apartment 4-B at 420 Central Park West, New York City.

MR. BLANK: The purpose of your being here today, Mr. Wager, is to discuss an article that you have written captioned 'The Pentagon's Favorite Magicians, by John Tiger.'

MR. WAGER: That is a pen name which I use.

MR. BLANK: Yes. Now, you sent this in through the mail with a letter requesting that it be reviewed for the purpose of determining whether it would comply with our rules, or if there is any violation of the statutes if this would be published, is that correct?

MR. WAGER: Well, not only statutory violations, but I didn't want to do anything which would in any way embarrass the Department of Defense on a policy level, or any other level; so not only for security clearance, but for factual accuracy and for policy reasons I submitted it for your opinion and advice, and also for clearance."

* * *

"MR. BLANK: ... There is something in here about codes, is there not?"

MR. WAGER: Sure, that is the subject of the entire article.

MR. BLANK: Have you been studying that particular field?"

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MR. WAGER: Codes? No, I am a free-lance writer. I write about everything. The last article I wrote, for example, was Governor Dan Thornton, Will he be Next in Eisenhower's Cabinet? Then I wrote an article called New Hope for Broken Hearts on a book about heart research and surgery. I am no expert on codes or electronics. I am really not an expert on anything except free-lance writing and law. I have a legal background, but technically I am a bust."

* * *

"MR. BLANK: Suppose you were selling this story, who would you sell it to?

MR. WAGER: You see, I have an agent, and on any story which involves any substantial sum of money--and I regret to say most of my articles have not thus far involved very substantial sums of money--I give it to the agent.

Now, she just sold a book for me, for example, that involved \$3,000. So on anything like that, I give it to the agent. I sent this article to the agent in the belief that she would know what would be a logical market for this, since she is much more acquainted with the literary field than I and has had a lengthier and more extensive contact with magazines.

I thought it might be suitable for magazines, say, like True--you may be familiar with that--or Argosy, or Saga, or Real, or any one of these men's adventure magazines. I don't think you could sell this to the Ladies' Home Companion. It's not their kind of thing.

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But I sent it to the agent and actually and happily she suggested I send it to you people for clearance. She said since the first sentence read you never read it in the newspapers, which is a literary trick, because I got most of this from newspaper clips and magazine articles, that I should submit it to you, because any editor who saw it said if he didn't read it in the newspapers, where did he find out about it, and is it O.K. with the Pentagon?

My agent, by the way, is Curtiss Brown and Company, Limited. They are a large literary agency in New York City.

MR. BLANK: Do you have the clippings of the magazine articles from which this story was written?

MR. WAGER: No, I don't have them all, but I could find out. Some of it comes from anecdotes people told me at the end of the war, but some of it comes from stuff--I remember in 1950 there was an article in *Colliers* which was about magic, which I think is the guts of this story. There was a big two or three page article in *Colliers*. Then there have been other things on magic. There was a piece in the *Times* in 1950--when the new codes security legislation was up, the *Times* ran on a whole series of articles mostly about the legislation, but occasionally something to indicate why the legislation was important.

MR. BLANK: Do you have all those documents?

MR. WAGER: I could find them for you, I suppose. I couldn't find the anecdotes people told me, because those haven't been printed; but most of this stuff--for example, the fact that during

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World War II we had a code organization--code-breaking organization which functioned under the title of Operation Magic--that I got from a magazine. The fact that it was at Arlington I got from a magazine or newspaper. The fact we had broken the Japanese code before Pearl Harbor I got from a published source. The fact that OSS didn't know magic had broken the Japanese code, I got from a published source. The fact that as a result of this ignorance OSS broke into the Japanese Embassy in Lisbon I got from a published source. The fact that the Japanese changed their code but in doing so transmitted the new code in the old code, that was an anecdote somebody who had been out in New Guinea or Australia told me that--I don't remember who that was, but I don't think that is a big hot issue now.

Almost all of this--now there is one thing here about this alleged Colonel who testified, unidentified Colonel who testified, wouldn't let them take pictures of him, that was mentioned in the Times that a code expert had testified and pictures were prohibited.

MR. BLANK: Where was that?

MR. WAGER: New York Times.

MR. BLANK: Where was this testimony?

MR. WAGER: Oh, Senate, up on the Hill I think.

MR. BLANK: Then you have all the documents?

MR. WAGER: I can get them for you. I can't get documents for the anecdotes, but for 80 percent of the article which is based upon published material."

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"MR. WAGER: I can send you the citations. I can't tear a piece out of the Times for 1950, but I can go to the Times office in New York and go to the public library, which is where I did all this, you see. I didn't write this in any top secret bunker under the Potomac, or anything. I wrote this in a New York public library. I can get you all the citations.

MR. BLANK: That would be fine.

MR. WAGER: Yeah.

MR. BLANK: Then when we have that we can find out how much of this information has been documented and --

MR. WAGER: Gee, I think you people would be right up on the ball and know exactly what has been published on codes. I should think you would keep a clip book, or something."

* * *

"MR. WAGER: I see. Is there some specific thing in here that you find disturbing from a security point of view?

MR. BLANK: Mr. Wager, I will tell you --

MR. WAGER: I wasn't in the armed forces, by the way.

MR. BLANK: -- what the situation as I see it is: certainly there has been a fair amount of material published on this subject, in Life magazine, a lot what you say in the magic business, Colliers --

MR. WAGER: That is a source I never came across it even.

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MR. BLANK: Colliers carried it, too, but the article does, to my mind, two things, and I have looked at it pretty carefully from the point of view of trying to identify published material.

MR. WAGER: Yes.

MR. BLANK: On the one hand there are points in it which are in fact classified and which I have no evidence of them having been published. In the second place, as you yourself have said, the Government has been at some pains, as in the case of the mysterious Colonel X, not to publicize this kind of activity.

MR. WAGER: Yes.

MR. BLANK: And your article certainly is written from a point of view which is made for popular consumption and would most certainly have the effect of publicizing it.

MR. WAGER: Can I interrupt you for a second, Mr. Blank, and tell you what my agent said about this?

MR. BLANK: Go ahead.

MR. WAGER: She is a very experienced young lady in the magazine business. When I sent her the first draft of this article she looked at it and said, 'I can't sell this, this has been printed already, and you have such a minute amount of material here which is post-1945, that this sounds like a collection of old war anecdotes.' She said, 'Take the tail end of your story'--the tail end of my original draft was about this mysterious Colonel and the fact that the Army's security agency is doing code work now--she said, 'Take that and put it up in the

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front so at least you will catch the reader with something which he hasn't read 20 times anyway.'

She said, 'You have got to make this sound a little more sensational, because while you are a good writer, you don't really have anything terrible fresh here.'

Now, Mr. Blank, if you can tell me what in here bothers you, I could probably tell you where I got every bit of it, because my memory is pretty good."

* * *

"MR. BLANK: If I tell you what is classified, I have violated security.

MR. WAGER: I see.

MR. BLANK: ... If you would like, we could go through the article.

MR. WAGER: Sure.

MR. BLANK: And you could perhaps indicate your sources.

MR. WAGER: Exactly.

MR. BLANK: If we go along on the whole paragraph by paragraph basis.

MR. WAGER: I would like to do that.

MR. BLANK: Why don't we?

MR. WAGER: We will have to hunch up here, because I brought a copy which is not quite complete. As I said, the cat got to it. The

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cat tore up the first page and the cat completely destroyed page 7. I think you have the only excellent copy in the world of page 7.

Now, to begin, it says, 'Disturbed by Whitaker Chambers' pumpkin microfilms and alarmed by authoritative reports that the late President Roosevelt himself felt enemy agents could easily crack the State Department's old fashioned ciphers, one of those inquisitive Senate Committees called on Army Intelligence for an expert evaluation of Uncle Sam's present codes.'

Well, I used the word 'present' with a certain amount of liberality, because this is 1950 material. This appeared in the New York Times when I believe it was Mr. Burley who testified before the Senate that the President felt enemy agents could crack the State Department's cyphers. It was, I know, in 1950 when the Senate had these hearings and the new code protection legislation was passed. That is the legislation to which I refer in the second paragraph from the end, 'On May 15, 1950 President Truman signed a law,' et cetera. O.K.

Now, 'The worried legislators wanted to talk to the top brain, a former civilian who became a colonel in 1942 and still wears those silver eagles.'

Well, I used that also in a fairly liberal sense. It is obvious from the limited knowledge I have of Pentagon procedures the head of our code department is not going to be a colonel. He is going to be a general at least, but the story I read was that there

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was a colonel who testified, so I made this colonel the top brain. From a literary point of view I think such liberties are permissible. This was published in the New York Times, that a Colonel did testify but that no pictures were permitted.

And the rest of that paragraph is about how no pictures were permitted, so that is all the Times.

Then it says, 'Where did he come from in the black limousine? From an elegant girls finishing school in nearby Virginia, an establishment which had become even more exclusive when military intelligence bought it in 1942 and redecorated with barbed wire fences and machinegun posts.'

This has been published in the New York Times at the end of the war in 1945 when they ran an article mentioning the establishment of Arlington Halls or Arlington Farms--I don't know which the name of it is.

'Whom did he work for? The Army Security Agency,' and then I go on to say, 'Few taxpayers have ever heard of it, but it is this secret unit which is working around the clock on decoding intercepted foreign messages.'

This I heard, I regret to say, at a cocktail party in Washington in 1945 -- a cocktail party or a lunch, or something. Somebody said, 'What is this ASA, Army Security? Is that like the Social Security, or what?' And somebody, male or female, drunk or sober--

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I don't know--said, 'They are in the code business,' whereupon the conversation went on to something else, like, 'Is Senator McCarthy here to stay?' Or 'Will the Washington Senators win this year?'

I didn't pay much attention to it, but I have a good memory, so when I was trying to dig out what is going on now, all I had to build an article on was the name of this outfit. I don't know if they are located in the basement of this building or Richmond, Virginia, or Denver, Colorado, or where they are, but I have the name.

Then it says Colonel X was a magician, and I go on to mention magic. Now, this, I confess, is also a little literary imagination, because I assume he must have come from magic to be in this project since from my point of view magic is the offspring -- this ASA is the offspring of magic just like CIA is the offspring of OSS.

Then we go on with how the OSS people didn't know about magic and broke into the Japanese Embassy in Lisbon. That was in the Times or the Colliers piece--no, I think the Colliers piece. O.K.

Then the fact that the Japanese sent out their new code and the old code, somebody told me -- somebody -- who? I don't know -- somebody who was in the Pacific, though. I mean, I didn't get that -- that is not 1949, this is something that was told to me at the end of the war when people came back and everybody was telling stories about 'what I did to win the war.'

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Then this business about how the Japanese code functioned; that is the fact that it's a four-digit number code. The same fellow told me that, that they used a numbered code, and I remember one thing about this fellow, he told me--whoever he was -- you see, I have been to three universities and I know people from all these universities, and it's kind of hard to sort them out -- he told me that he never knew most of what the hell he was doing and that occasionally his colonel, whom he said had worked in Panama before the war -- yes, his colonel with some sort of a foreign-sounding name -- an American with a name of foreign extraction -- his colonel once came to him and said, 'Well, you have done a very good job here.' He didn't know what the hell he had done. He just had a jumble of numbers, but this person had been in either Australia or New Guinea with a -- it was apparently a small magic unit, signal intelligence, signal security -- was there some such title during the war?

That is what this fellow did anyway, it was signal intelligence or signal security.

Now, this business about the fact that you break codes by the recurrent letter frequency, that I got from the Colliers article; and the fact that 'nulls' are used I got from the Colliers article.

Then this stuff about the fact we had a Black Chamber in the first world war was either in the Colliers article or in a book Another Black Chamber by Yardley.

MR. BLANK: Yes.

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MR. WAGER: Yes. Then this stuff about all the mysterious miscellaneous types in OSS, that I know, because I know OSS people -- I knew some anyway.

Then here is what apparently got Mr. Blank off on the thought that I am an electronic genius, 'There were special costly machines for the code cracking teams, secret devices designed by U. S. and European engineers.'

Now, I read somewhere that parts of our code cracking or end coding machines--and I must confess I wouldn't know one from the other if it fell on me--parts of these machines or perhaps the whole machines were designed in Sweden. This was published. This was not told to me. So that is how I got U. S. and European. I gave our engineers a little credit, too, gratuitously.

Then it says, 'These gadgets clattered away day and night'. Well, I assumed they are working three shifts--I wasn't there but -- then it says, 'Our planning for the decisive Battle of Midway . . . was based on a message decoded'. That has been published. And then this information that our 'code-busters enabled our fighter planes to shoot down the transport carrying the top admiral of the Imperial Fleet', that has been published.

Now we come to the business about the weather over Japan. This, I think, is probably what is bothering you. The fact that we dropped meteorologists into Outer Mongolia was done in a film called Operation Gobi. I refer you to the 20th Century Fox Corporation for

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further details. I think they had Mr. Richard Widmark as the master mind there.

Then I go on to say, 'the weather over Japan drifts across and down from Siberia, where our Soviet Allies have long maintained an extensive network of meteorological stations.'

Now, this is what I think bothers you, where I say that we asked the Russians for the weather over Siberia and they wouldn't give it to us and we broke their weather code.

It occurred to me--it is very unlikely--but it occurred to me the Russians might be stupid enough to be still using the same weather code. If so, you wouldn't want this printed, obviously, to let them know we know their weather; but this was told to me and I remember where: this was told to me at a football game in 1946.

I am a graduate of Columbia College and we have what you call a homecoming reunion. I remember the game very clearly -- we lost to Cornell. It was a gray day and there was a mob of people. The backfield was jammed; and before the football game -- I don't know how your universities work -- we have a picnic and people gather around tables, not only from my class, but from classes back to 1898. I am class of 1944.

Somebody told this business about we have broken the Russian weather code. Somebody else told the story he had been parachuted into Yugoslavia to work with Tito or into Italy to blow up bridges--now a gossip columnist, this kid, but I don't think he is the one that told

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me about the other thing because the other thing involved the Pacific. I don't know who that was. But it was 1946.

Then this business about how the Russians offered to swap material on the Japanese code with us, the same guy told me that.

Now, you may not--I am sure you are not very happy about the fact people have talked about this stuff, but as I say here in the next paragraph of the article it was a Harvard chemistry instructor who told me about the atom bomb a year before it went off at Hiroshima.

And I remember another incident which I didn't put in here. During the war when I was in law school I met a naval officer on a train, a warrant officer--no, they don't have that--a petty officer, and he told me about a scheme to use aircraft with television cameras in them so that an admiral at Pearl Harbor could watch a carrier strike on Tokyo. I didn't think about this very much until three months later when the war ended and I met an electronics officer whom I knew, and I said -- his name is Bob something, he had gone to college with me, he was at MIT at the naval electronics thing -- I said, 'You know, I heard about this television relay setup.'

He had a fit. He had a real fit. He said, 'My God, that is Operation Cadillac'.

I said, 'Well, you are very lucky the Japanese surrendered yesterday.'

He said, 'Who told you that?'

I said, 'Somebody told me on a train, a petty officer.'

Well, he was in a sweat. So people do talk about these things.

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Now, this business about how we tried to barter numbers with the Russians, this was told to me, I presume to the best of my recollection, by the same guy who told me about the Russian weather code. It is the only connection that comes to me.

If this is classified -- all I can say I am very glad that nobody but myself and my agent has ever seen this. My wife started to read the article. She read half a page and said it was the most boresome dribble she ever read and refused to read it any more. That is why she is rather disturbed because she doesn't know what is bothering you people.

Then this whole business about the Russians giving us false numbers was that one anecdote.

Then the fact that the OSS was changed into CIA, I think you can get in any newspaper, because that must have been where I got it.

Then I go on to say, 'Little is known of the size of the Security Agency Staff'. That is true. I went to the New York Times index again and again and again. I couldn't find anything about it. So the New York Times doesn't know anything more about it. Readers' Guide didn't know about it. All the periodical indices didn't know about it.

Then I am afraid here has been a real flight of fancy -- I say, 'It's at least a thousand men and women, soldiers and civilians' -- that is a guess on my part. I have seen estimates that CIA ranges from five to fifteen thousand.

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Then I say, 'Quite a few of the code experts were drawn from "Magic," -- that is very logical. That was just, shall we call, intelligence speculation on my part.

Then this business about what the Russian codes are now, this was in a book, I think by a man called Kurt Singer. He has written about ten books on espionage. The last one got an awful review in the Times, Men on the Trojan Horse; but this was from one of his earlier books.

About the Russians tearing pages, and this business about the Russians used loose-leaf books, this was told to me -- I remember who and where -- when I was at Northwestern Law School in 1948. We had a German Exchange student who had formerly been a Wehrmacht, a German radio sergeant, and he told that they had captured some of these torn-out pages which were then useless because once they are torn out they never use them again.

Now, if this bothers you, you could find out from the Northwestern Law School records what German exchange student they had in '48 or '9. He was sent to the United States by a Quaker organization, if I recall. I think that was it.

Then I go on to say, 'There hasn't been a whisper about the techniques being used by the Army Security Agency today.'

That, I presume, is a tribute to you gentlemen's diligence.

Then, 'On May 15, 1950, President Truman signed a law' -- that is a result of my diligence in reading the New York Times.

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And the last paragraph is merely cuteness, where I say, 'But don't ask the mysterious Colonel X how they do those incredible tricks. You know what magicians always say, "It's a secret!"'

It is. Nobody has published anything on it, and I don't know, either. That is it. It's the whole sad story.

MR. BLANK: Here we are faced with this dilemma that, as I say, there is most certainly some material in the article which is classified.

MR. WAGER: Tell me something, Mr. Blank.

MR. BLANK: Yes, sir?

MR. WAGER: I gather, first of all, nobody is supposed to know that the Army's security agency is breaking codes. And I gather you wouldn't want me to print that. I am not going to have much of an article left at that point, because I am going to have a collection leftover old World War II stories.

But rather than get in trouble here--because I would like to do other articles sometimes, not about controversial items, but which may require help from the Pentagon--I am willing to drop that or, indeed, if you people feel it's absolutely necessary -- although I put in almost a week of my time researching this thing -- this being a free-lance writer, the only commercial property I have is time and literary skill -- this means I am out a week. But certainly my concern for the national security is such that if you feel I ought to drop it --

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I mean, upon due reflection -- I would drop it. I would even leave you this only copy there is. But I would rather not.

MR. BLANK: It is a shame. I think we certainly would have to advise you awfully strongly --

MR. WAGER: To drop it?

MR. BLANK: To drop it.

MR. WAGER: If you feel that way, and you are in the business, I will go along with that without a moment's hesitation.

MR. BLANK: We certainly have the responsibility not to ask you to do a thing like that without having thought about it very carefully and having consulted people who have both the technical knowledge and the sense of public relations, of not asking frivolously to drop a thing like that which represents a loss and an inconvenience to you.

MR. WAGER: Well, I suppose from your point of view -- and I am not trying to be frivolous, either -- you'd rather nothing was ever published on how codes are broken, on how codes have been broken, what a code is, how to spell the word 'code' -- you'd rather this whole subject was kept out of the press.

MR. BLANK: I think there are two issues, really. One is the perhaps more substantial one of there being information here which is classified and our being in the embarrassing situation of not being able to pinpoint it because by doing so we in fact reveal classified material to you; and the second thing is exactly the point that you

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have made very well in the article, that a good bit of effort has been put into trying not to publicise these kinds of activities.

MR. WAGER: Ten years in jail, \$10,000 fine, that is quite strong language there. I like it on this side of the bars myself, and I am certainly a patriotic American who wouldn't want to do anything which would in any way impede our national security or help any foreign or hostile powers. You suggest I drop it?

MR. BLANK: I think it would be a worth-while thing certainly for the country if the thing were not published.

MR. WAGER: Let me wash my hands of it in grand style, Mr. Blank. There is one carbon. I will give it to you so that the cat or the maid or nobody will get at it. O.K.? Because, if it's this warm--and I shy away from the word 'hot,' I don't even want it around. I will write articles about the Governor of Colorado who is not a military asset, unless he happens to go in the National Guard. I mean, there are plenty of other things to write about. I just thought -- well, I don't know if you are familiar with the problems of a free-lance writer, I assume you are not, but you have got to write about something lively.

MR. BLANK: Sure.

MR. WAGER: And yet I am not going to write stories, 'Is Kinsey ruining your Life?' I am not that kind of a writer. So when I went into the free-lance writing business--I have only been in it less than a year--first, I had to draw on what stuff I had in my head --

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MR. BLANK: Surely.

MR. WAGER: -- to start out with. Now I can do research on Dan Thornton or just -- I did a piece on a gambler in Louisiana. Dandy Phil Castel, who is a member of Mr. Costello's illegal organization.

MR. BLANK: Yes.

MR. WAGER: That you can do by going through the Kefauver hearings and nobody minds.

MR. BLANK: It's fascinating. I often wondered about freelance writing, what equipment you have to have; I guess a lot of resourcefulness, isn't it?

MR. WAGER: Good arches would help you. You have to go from library to library, look at microfilms, and a certain amount of ingenuity. If it doesn't show up in the Times index, I know people on a couple of newspapers, and they let me look at their morgue clippings. So when Dandy Phil Castel, for example, didn't get very good coverage from the New York Times, I went to a boy I know on the New York Daily News, which is a sensational tabloid. They had a whole folder on that guy. He has been a gambler back as far as 1918.

O.K., no codes this year.

MR. BLANK: I am dreadfully sorry, and I think we certainly are grateful to you.

MR. WAGER: There are two other things I wanted to ask you gentlemen. I have done my best to be cooperative with you. I have come down here at my own expense, and called you when you didn't

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answer my letter about the appointment, and everything. This wouldn't embarrass me if I ever wanted a job with the Government or anything, would it? Because my background is in aviation. Some day I might want to go to work for the CAB.

MR. BLANK: Mr. BLANK is the expert on that.

MR. BLANK: Well, of course --

MR. BLANK: It would seem to me that you have been very cooperative.

MR. BLANK: I doubt very much if any decision would be made based on this to either hire you or not to hire you.

MR. WAGER: I see.

MR. BLANK: It is a combination of your background, if your background were all right; I think you have evidenced a desire to be cooperative.

MR. WAGER: Good.

MR. BLANK: Which is in the record and certainly that can do you no harm.

MR. WAGER: Oh, good, good."

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