

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET CANOE - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

17 August 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, USCIB

SUBJECT: Program to Improve the Communications Security of NATO Countries

REFERENCE: USCIB 23/70

1. The proposals presented in this memorandum are submitted in response to the decision of USCIB, at its Eighty-eighth Meeting on 10 July 1953, that the Department of State should be the cognizant US authority with respect to certain preliminary steps contained in the Report of the recent US-UK Conference on the Communications Security (COMSEC) of NATO Countries. These proposals have been approved by the Secretary of State. The specific preliminary steps which they concern are the determination of (a) the nature of the initial approach to the French and (b) the terms of reference and composition of the Combined (US-UK) Working Group to be set up in Washington to facilitate coordination of this program.

2. Considerations affecting the initial approach to the French.

a. Despite existing covert contacts with French intelligence authorities, who have already indicated that they are aware of the vulnerability of the communications of certain other NATO countries and are concerned that corrective steps be undertaken, it would be best not to use intelligence channels for this approach so as to avoid the difficulty of discussing foreign COMSEC practices on an intelligence basis [redacted] or

[redacted]

b. Since it will not be possible to demonstrate

[redacted]

prepare

Enclosure with USCIB: 14/313.

PL 86-36/50 USC 3605
EO 3.3(h) (2)

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 07-30-2014 pursuant to E.O. 13526

- 2 -

prepare jointly with the US and UK a set of minimum COMSEC standards and procedures to be applied throughout the NATO countries and then to assure that these standards and procedures can be met within the French Government before proposing them to others.

c. It will be imperative that all contacts made within the French Government are secure and are given adequate authority.

d. The Tripartite Security Working Group (US-UK-French), which has been in existence since 1950, would appear to offer the best means of achieving an orderly and secure arrangement for direct discussion between the proper COMSEC authorities of the three governments. Although the work of this Group has not heretofore included COMSEC matters, the Group has developed cooperative and secure contacts among responsible French authorities in general security matters.

3. The initial approach to the French. To assure wholehearted cooperation by the French in sponsoring jointly with the US and UK the overall program for other NATO countries and in making effective improvements in French COMSEC, the French Government should be approached first at the cabinet level. The project should then be assigned to the Tripartite Security Survey Group to establish proper contact between COMSEC authorities of the three governments. As a practical matter, and as a means of achieving the greatest possible compulsion, this approach should be undertaken jointly by US and UK representatives.

a. Phase 1. At the cabinet level the French Government should be requested by the US and UK ambassadors to agree in principle that the overall security of NATO requires that a broad program be undertaken to improve the security of the national communications of NATO countries, and that this program should be initiated through the Standing Group as a logical extension of the existing COMSEC program of the NATO organization itself. This improvement should be accomplished by the promulgation of minimum COMSEC standards to be adopted on a NATO-wide basis. To this end the terms of reference of the Tripartite Security Survey should be extended to include the preliminary development and application of these standards on a tripartite basis. This phase should be handled by the Department of State and the Foreign Office.

b. Phase 2. The Tripartite Security Working Group should then set up a technical sub-group to be composed of appropriate COMSEC authorities selected by the Tripartite

Security

~~TOP SECRET CANOE - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

- 3 -

Security Working Group and authorized by their respective governments to represent all COMSEC activities of these governments. This phase should be handled by selected members of the US and UK Tripartite Security Teams as agreed between the participating agencies.

c. Phase 3. The COMSEC authorities should then proceed to develop minimum COMSEC standards and to apply them within the three governments. US participation in this phase should be handled by the National Security Agency (NSA).

4. The Combined (US-UK) Working Group. To assure that the COMINT aspects and limitations of this program are properly coordinated, the Combined Working Group should be under the direction of USCIB and LSIB. It should serve to:

a. coordinate US and UK proposals for the initial approach to the French, subsequent technical discussions, preparation of a memorandum to be issued by the NATO Standing Group and formulation of minimum security standards;

b. coordinate between the US and UK conclusions as to the status of the COMSEC of NATO countries as this program develops; and

c. coordinate US and UK recommendations for further steps, as envisaged in paragraph 23 of the Conference Report, should this program not accomplish the desired response from NATO countries or improvement in their COMSEC.

The US element of this Group should also serve as an ad hoc subcommittee of USCIB to keep this entire program under continuous review for the Board. To this end, US participation should include appropriate representatives of the Department of State, NSA, CIA, FBI and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The overriding political character of the initial phases of this program indicates that the US element of this Group should be headed by its Department of State member.

5. It is recommended that the plan described in paragraphs 3 and 4 above be referred by USCIBEC and USCIB for approval and implementation, including presentation to appropriate UK authorities.

(Signed)
W. PARK ARMSTRONG, JR.