

DD FORM 1301  
~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

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CONS

~~TOP SECRET CANOE - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

19 September 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL CANINE

SUBJECT: Measures for Increased Security of COMINT.

Reference: My memo of 29 July 1952, same subject.

1. As stated to you on several occasions, I have become convinced that we have gone beyond the point where we can any longer safely rely entirely on mere security regulations, clearances, and indoctrinations such as are currently being used to protect our COMINT activities. Aside from the increased hazards which have resulted from the great expansion of the COMINT organizations and consumer agencies, new dangers are now arising out of NATO cooperation for which additional safeguards must be found. Moreover, we have developed a tendency to think in terms of different degrees of secrecy which results in procedures that sometimes confuse the end with the means. We have been inclined to take the view that the more important a thing is, the more secret it is, and hence the more closely it must be held. This may be thoroughly sound from the standpoint of security alone, but it may also be in direct conflict with the real operational needs for dissemination.

2. Actually, our security problem is not one of dealing with different levels of secrecy but of providing different degrees of protection, or taking certain calculated risks, in accordance with estimated hazards. The reason for this is that matters which are of concern to our government must either be denied to foreign governments or they need not be, i.e., they are either U.S. secrets or they are not. If denial is necessary, protective measures must be taken, and the measures required depend upon the risks involved. These in turn depend essentially upon the damage that may result from disclosure and the possibilities that such disclosure may occur, either inadvertently or otherwise. Other things being equal, these possibilities naturally vary with the number of offices and persons handling or having access to the matters.

3. When we say, as we now do in effect, that certain matters may be given wider circulation than others because they are supposedly less secret or carry a lower security classification, we presumably take some account of the damaging effect of compromise. However, without ignoring the fact that some matters are in fact less important than others, we might be on firmer ground if we took the position, as a general rule, that certain matters require wider circulation or dissemination, and, therefore, additional security measures should be taken accordingly. This would seem to be a more logical point of view since the extent of circulation or dissemination required (i.e., the number of persons who actually need to know) may have no relation whatever to the level of secrecy under present security classifications.

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 04-09-2014 pursuant to E.O. 13526

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FORM 781-C10SC  
18 JUL 51

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19 September 1952

SUBJECT: Measures for Increased Security of COMINT

4. With a view toward investigating the possibilities of coping better with our security problem by issuing our products in a less sensitive form, our Russian Plain Text Group has carried out for me some experiments in rewriting their reports to eliminate direct indications of the COMINT source, and particularly the precise source. The results are attached hereto. These results, in my opinion, show sufficient possibilities to warrant further investigation. Obviously, the procedures employed and the reports as revised involve certain disadvantages. However, just as obvious is the fact that we must take every feasible precaution, and be prepared to pay a reasonable price, to insure protection of an investment that is costing us a half billion dollars annually and has an incalculable potential value.


5. This initial experiment is, of course, by no means conclusive, and further study is required. For this purpose, I believe that our objectives must be clearly set forth. With respect to COMINT, we have several things to safeguard. These are the information derived, the source of the information, our means of deriving it, and our ability to synthesize it. Our security will be effective only to the extent that we can safeguard each one of them. Any gains we can make toward protecting any of these things are, therefore, worthwhile. The first step should be to ascertain what elements of our reports are absolutely essential to our consumers. The supply of anything beyond the factual substance of our products, plus a reliability or credibility grading, in the free manner in which it is now disseminated must be based on an unquestionable need if we are to be justified in assuming the risks involved. We cannot hope to eliminate all COMINT indications or to disguise reports to the point where they are in every case unrecognizable as COMINT, but I believe we can and must publish as many products as possible (and especially those that may require relatively wide circulation) in a form that will not gratuitously reveal the precise circuit, office, or individual from which or whom the information came, or the exact degree of our technical successes. There are undoubtedly ways in which technical data and other associated details can be made available when really needed, without using the broadcast system now in effect.

  
J. N. WENGER  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy  
Deputy Director, Intelligence

Incl - 1

Ltr dtd 20 Aug 52, subj: Rewriting  
of Russian Plain Language COMINT  
Reports, w/10 incls.

Copies furnished:

CONS (w/o incl but with cy of ref.)   
Dr. Shinn, OPNS (24A) (w/o incl but with cy of ref.)  
OPNS (w/o incl)

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