

JOHN McDONN

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
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re replying refer to

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M. I. 6.WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON.

April 23, 1919.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY.

Subject: The American Telephone and Telegraph  
Cipher System.

The Acting Secretary of War directs that a letter substantially as follows be sent to Mr. George Fabyan, Riverbank Laboratories, Geneva, Illinois, as a reply to his letter of March 23, 1919, attached herewith:

Your letter of March 23, 1919, addressed to the Secretary of War, Washington, D. C., subject: "The dangers of the so-called indecipherable Machine Ciphers", in which the opinion is expressed that an enemy can decipher messages sent by the system devised by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in conjunction with experts of the War Department, was received and has had careful consideration.

Referring to the deciphered message included in your letter, and upon which apparently you based your opinion expressed as to the vulnerability of the machine and system in question, you are advised that we are informed that this is the No. 2 of a group of seven messages transmitted to you on June 11, 1918, by Mr. Gherardi for analysis and test, and that of this group of seven messages, Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 7 were submitted as test messages for the purpose of ascertaining the possibility of their decipherment by an enemy. Since messages Nos. 2, 3 and 4 were not put up in the arrangement it was proposed to use, Mr. Gherardi did not submit them as test messages but expressed the opinion that no doubt you would be able to decipher these three.

If at any time you shall have succeeded in deciphering any one of messages Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 7, the War Department would receive with interest a statement of your accomplishments along these lines.

M. Churchill  
Brigadier General, General Staff  
Director of Military Intelligence  
Assistant Chief of Staff

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