

~~SECURITY INFORMATION~~
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20 March 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR COLONEL HETHERINGTON:

SUBJECT: Comments on Draft Report on Processing of Plain-Text

1. It is assumed that the paper is intended to deal solely with the problem stated, viz., "to review the processing of plain-text foreign communications for intelligence, in order to determine whether it would be feasible or advantageous to transfer the responsibility for this processing from the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)." If this assumption is correct, any material in the paper which does not deal specifically with the problem as stated should be eliminated. On this basis the whole of Par. 2 of "Facts Bearing on the Problem and Discussion" should be eliminated, as it has no bearing on the problem as stated.
2. In fact, in my opinion the whole section referred to above is very weak, since of its two paragraphs one should be eliminated and the other says nothing of a substantive nature. As a general rule the Conclusions in a report show their foundation in the material which immediately precedes them but in this case I hardly think it could be said that the material contained in the "Facts Bearing on the Problem and Discussion" afford a good basis for the "Conclusions" stated. It is true that the latter are supported by the data contained in the Enclosure but if I were the recipient of the report and did not have the time, the desire or the energy to read the Enclosure I would reject the paper in toto, as setting forth Conclusions and Recommendations not supported by the material preceding them.
3. The reason for incorporating Conclusions 3c and 3d is not clear, since the Problem as stated does not raise any questions as to possible improvement in our plain-text processing. If such questions were intended and are to be answered, then the statement of the problem should be revised; if they were not raised then all material dealing with those unasked questions should be eliminated from the paper.
4. I think the contents of Pars. 1-4, inclusive, of the Enclosure are excellent. I am not sure as to the value of Par. 5 for this paper; and I think Par. 6 could be improved. Something has happened to Par. 7; it has been lost in the typing or else the numbering of Pars. 8-11 should be changed.
5. Pars. 8-11, inclusive, deal with questions referred to in my paragraph 3 above; if the questions are indeed intended to be raised and answered, those paragraphs are probably satisfactory. But I would have a separate paper devoted solely to that subject. In other words, let us first settle the question as to where plain-text processing is to be conducted for maximum overall COMINT production; having settled that, then attack the next question: how to improve that part of COMINT production.

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6. One phase pertinent to the problem as stated has not been treated in the paper, viz., the matter of COMINT communications, especially those connected with the forwarding of raw material to the processing center. If AFSA continues to do the plain-text processing, those communications are all well-established and no changes would be necessary; but if another agency, such as CIA, were to be given plain-text processing, serious problems involving communications would arise. Would CIA get its own raw material? If so, another whole and duplicative intercept and communications system would have to be established, since at present there are very few target circuits which are exclusively devoted to plain-text transmissions. On the other hand, if the raw material continues to come to AFSA, the plain-text sorted out and then turned over to CIA, it is almost a foregone conclusion that one more copy of all plain-text intercepts would have to be produced somewhere - either at the intercept site or at AFSA - since AFSA has to have the plain-text traffic for purposes other than the production of plain-text translations, for T/A and intercept control, for example, as pointed out in Par. 4a of the Enclosure. We are having difficulty already in regard to obtaining the minimum required number of copies of raw material; while it does not sound like much, to require one more copy to be made, I imagine that it would be a perhaps unsupportable burden.

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