

SRH-270

ARMY-NAVY-FBI  
COMINT AGREEMENTS OF 1942

DECLASSIFIED per Part 3, E. O. 12356  
by Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

7/RS Date: 21 Feb '84

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## The Army-Navy-FBI Comint Agreements of 1942

When the United States entered the Second World War, significant measures had already been taken toward establishing a national intelligence policy, especially relating to the Western Hemisphere. On 26 June 1939, President Roosevelt had issued an order to the government departments restricting investigation of espionage and sabotage to the Army, Navy and FBI. These agencies clarified their relationship in the Delimitations Agreement of 5 June 1940, whereby the Military Intelligence Division (MID) and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) were to have cognizance over the services' military and civilian personnel in espionage/counterespionage and sabotage matters, while the FBI would have that responsibility for civilians. Overseas the MID was to have authority for the Philippines and Panama, ONI for Guam and Samoa, and the FBI for the other territories (Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaska).

On 24 June 1940, President Roosevelt made broad foreign intelligence assignments. The FBI was to collect intelligence and conduct counterintelligence operations in the Western Hemisphere while all other foreign intelligence was to be the responsibility of the Army and Navy. Given this charter, the FBI began to augment its small staff in Latin America by forming the Special Intelligence Service to combat (primarily) German covert operations.

In a final pre-war directive, the President approved the formation of the Coordinator of Information (COI) in June-July 1941. The COI was renamed the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1942 and ultimately became the primary U.S. intelligence organization (other than Comint) of World War II.

The subject of this article will be expanded in a forthcoming volume of the Cryptologic History Series.

U.S. communications intelligence activities were not the subject of presidential directive in the pre-war period. This may be because of the extreme secrecy surrounding this activity and perhaps because the President's chief advisors on intelligence matters (such as William J. Donovan of COI and J. Edgar Hoover) were initially interested in other intelligence matters. There were, however, agreements between the Army and Navy Comint organizations. The most famous of these, arrived at in August 1940, was the agreement to divide decryption and translation of Japanese diplomatic and consular traffic on an every-other-day basis, *i.e.*, the Army on even days and the Navy on odd. A version of this system continued until the summer of 1942. On 3 October 1940, the Chief Signal Officer of the Army and the Director of Naval Communications approved proposals made by their subordinates in the Army's Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Navy's Comint organization, OP-20-G, for dividing all diplomatic traffic then being intercepted. Diplomatic traffic had been the prime area of service disagreement.<sup>1</sup>

The basic wartime agreements were reached in a roundabout fashion: they originated with questions concerning cryptanalysis of German clandestine systems in the Western Hemisphere. Since 1940, the Comint organization within the U.S. Coast Guard had been intercepting, analyzing and processing German Intelligence covert traffic to and from stations in the Western Hemisphere and Germany. The results of the

<sup>1</sup>OP-20-G had been intercepting and attacking Japanese naval systems since the 1920s. The Army's SIS lacked the capability in 1940 to intercept or process Axis military communications and thus concentrated on diplomatic.

diplomatic communications, was almost helpless, due to lack of equipment and personnel and a confused command situation. There, as in Alaska, where there was no SIS unit, the Army turned to the Federal Communications Commission (and the Navy) for Comint support.<sup>5</sup>

During the early months of the war (and throughout the war) the Army had a dual intercept operation. The SIS had monitoring stations through its field operating arm, the Second Signal Service Company/Battalion. The intercept was returned to SIS for processing by radio by mail or by courier. The SIS monitoring sites were considered fixed or permanent facilities.

The major commands were supported in the field by intercept units known as Signal Radio Intelligence (SRI) companies. By mid-March 1942 a number of SRI companies (or detachments thereof) were deployed in the CONUS or overseas, under the command and control of the appropriate Army commander in the area, or were in training at Camp Crowder, Missouri. The relationship of the SRIs to the SIS was tenuous, although the SRI units were formed, trained and equipped by the Signal Corps.

On 31 March 1942, the MIS sent to the deployed SRI companies, through the appropriate commanding generals, broad intercept directives. This was in keeping with MIS's responsibilities under War Department Circular 59 (an implementing document of the 9 March reorganization), which stated that MIS "... under the direction of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Military Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, will operate and administer the service of the collection, compilation, and dissemination of military intelligence." Typical of these broad directives was that to the Commanding General, Western Defense Command (Lt. General De Witt) regarding the employment of the 102nd and 125th SRI companies located at the Presidio and Fort Lewis, respectively. They were to copy "Japanese Army radio stations" and the "... Chief Signal Officer is hereby authorized to communicate with the organization commanders of (these) unit(s) on matters pertaining to desired circuits, known frequencies, form of copying material, copying of station logs and method of submitting traffic..." The intercept was to be mailed to Washington for the attention of the SIS.

At the same time a message was drafted in MIS by Carter Clarke, who was now fully involved in Comint matters, to General MacArthur in Brisbane, directing him to draw up his own intercept directives and advising him that the Chief Signal Officer would be authorized to deal directly with MacArthur's SRI company on certain intercept matters.<sup>6</sup>

On 18 April 1942, an MIS letter to SIS, signed by Hayes Kroner, ordered the expansion of SIS, established a new organizational structure for SIS, and listed Comint targets in the order of priority desired by the MIS. But, apparently in recognition of the fact that MIS did not control SIS, that organization was authorized to alter the priorities, when warranted by conditions, but to promptly notify MIS of such action. As part of the SIS expansion, MIS directed the establishment of a large intercept site near Washington to cover European traffic, and one on the West Coast to cover the Pacific. MIS also recommended that SIS consider moving away from Washington for security from possible air raids and the attention of enemy agents. There were seven Comint priorities for the SIS. First priority concerned hostile military communications: the army and air forces of Germany, Japan and Italy, in that order. Second priority was the communications of the Axis military attaches. Among other highlights of this MIS letter were:

- a. Intercept material was to be fully processed and translations furnished to MIS;
- b. Collaboration with the British was authorized—exchanges of traffic, methods of solution, liaison personnel; and
- c. The Army was to develop and procure mobile D/F equipment, leaving long-range, fixed D/F stations to other government agencies.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, on 3 April 1942, in a message from General George C. Marshall to General MacArthur (drafted by Clarke), the War Department responded to an urgent request by MacArthur for cryptanalytic, cryptographic, translator and machine personnel. MacArthur was advised that 10 officers and 8 enlisted men would depart by air for Australia (this would be the SIS detachment headed by Abraham Sinkov) at "an early date" to establish a Comint unit. MacArthur was

<sup>5</sup>During 1940, George Sterling of the FCC organized the National Defense Operation unit, later known as the Radio Intelligence Division (RID). While RID's main function was illicit traffic in the U.S. and Axis clandestine traffic between Europe-Western Hemisphere-Africa, it willingly assisted the Army and Navy during crisis periods, a matter most galling to the services' high command.

<sup>6</sup>A detachment of the 121st SRI company was in Australia by March 1942.

<sup>7</sup>The other agencies were presumably the Navy-Coast Guard and FCC.



1. Carter W. Clarke and Alfred McCormack who organized the Special Branch of the Military Intelligence Service in 1942. (photo shows Colonel McCormack receiving the DSC in 1945)

Following the Pearl Harbor disaster Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson ordered a review of Army Comint. He directed the assistant secretary, John J. McCloy, to recommend someone to accomplish the study. McCloy gave the job to his former law partner, Alfred McCormack. On 10 January 1942, McCormack received his charge from Secretary Stimson:

- a. Determine the means of expanding Army communications intelligence, and
- b. Develop methods for proper correlation and presentation of the intelligence.

McCormack and several civilian assistants studied both the production aspects (SIS) of Comint and its handling within MID. They consulted with Brigadier General Raymond E. Lee, the new Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2; Brigadier General George V. Strong, who would soon replace Lee; and Lt. Col. Carter W. Clarke, who headed the Safeguarding Military Information Section of G-2; and SIS personnel. McCormack learned that the handling of Comint within the Far Eastern Section of MID had not changed greatly since Pearl Harbor. He observed that the chief of the section would "... take what looked interesting and pass it along in paraphrased form, without any attempt to check or evaluate the information or to supplement it by collateral intelligence."<sup>3</sup>

By March 1942, McCormack had decided that Comint required thorough evaluation within MID and that persons with special analytic ability would have to be obtained. He also believed that MID should be given operational control of Army Comint operations rather

<sup>3</sup>I believe McCormack was speaking of Colonel W. C. Crane rather than Colonel Bratton, although the latter was still in MID.

than share it with the Signal Corps, and that intercept and processing activities must be expanded.

On 9 March 1942, the War Department was reorganized. There resulted drastic changes in the organization and administration of the General Staff, combat arms and the support services. Army intelligence was affected in several ways. The new MID was to be a small staff organization divorced from intelligence operations. The latter were to be undertaken by the newly formed Military Intelligence Service (MIS), a supposedly independent War Department agency which, however, reported to the AC of S, G-2. Colonel Hayes A. Kroner was named as the Chief of MIS with the additional title of Deputy AC of S, G-2. MIS was to be responsible for collecting and evaluating intelligence. Under the new organization, the Signal Corps, which meant the SIS too, was placed under the Services of Supply (soon renamed the Army Service Forces), an immense new CONUS command that would also include the formerly independent Chemical Corps, Ordnance Corps, Engineers, Quartermaster Corps and others. Thus, the Chief Signal Officer (CSO) lost his direct access to the General Staff and the Chief of Staff. The Commanding General of the Services of Supply was Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell, a veteran engineer without knowledge of or access to Comint. The problem was compounded because the Chief Signal Officer, Dawson Olmstead, had, unlike his predecessor, Joseph O. Mauborgne, little time for or interest in the SIS.<sup>4</sup>

The SIS had entered the war with a strength in Washington and the field of approximately 350 military and civilian personnel. Its highly successful intercept and cryptanalysis effort in the immediate pre-war period had been against clandestine (Western Hemisphere) communications. The SIS had neither the facilities, equipment nor personnel to deal also with Japanese or German military communications. The small SIS detachment in the Philippines (perhaps 15 men) had been intercepting Purple and other Japanese diplomatic systems prior to Pearl Harbor. Beginning on the afternoon of 8 December 1941, the detachment turned its attention to Japanese Army and Army Air communications in an attempt to identify traffic patterns and provide early warning of air strikes. In Hawaii the SIS unit, which had also been covering Japanese

<sup>4</sup>Mauborgne, due to retire in September 1941, was forced out a month or so early by General Marshall, ostensibly because of problems in Air Corps communications. Mauborgne was a cryptanalyst who was closely involved with Friedman, Yardley, Hitt et al in World War I communications intelligence. At least in the intelligence sphere, one may criticize General Marshall's selection of key personnel: appointing Miles as AC of S, G-2 in 1940, replacing Mauborgne with Olmstead in the face of a crisis.

USCG efforts were given to the FBI, which agency had been given authority for counterespionage operations in the hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> This intelligence was also provided, at least after a Treasury Department directive of 17 June 1941, to the MID, ONI and the State Department. During the late summer of 1941, British intelligence in the U.S. also began to receive results of the USCG operation. This was accomplished through liaison by \_\_\_\_\_ of the British Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1942, the USCG operation was merged into OP-20-G, where it remained throughout the war. \_\_\_\_\_ seeking assurance that the British receipt of this intelligence would continue, sent representatives to discuss the situation with Commander John Redman, head of OP-20-G, and LCDR A. D. Kramer, one of his section chiefs. Kramer suggested to Redman that the first step in collaboration should be coordination of U.S. Comint efforts regarding German clandestine traffic. He suggested that the State Department should chair a coordination conference. On 28 March 1942 such a meeting was proposed by the Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear Admiral T. S. Wilkinson, in a letter to Adolph Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State.<sup>4</sup>

A conference held in Berle's office on 2 April 1942 was attended by representatives of the Army, Navy, FBI and Federal Communications Commission. The conferees discussed the possibility of seizing German clandestine radio stations that had been located but whose traffic was being exploited. The participants agreed that no action should be taken against a station without joint approval of both the Army and Navy. James Fly, Chairman of the FCC, then raised the basic issue: should not the cryptanalytic efforts of the various government agencies be consolidated? Redman agreed that this should be done, but for German clandestine traffic only. He suggested that all work against that target should be done by the

<sup>2</sup>The FBI was also engaged in cryptanalysis against German and Japanese systems beginning in late 1940 or early 1941.

<sup>4</sup>Berle was President Roosevelt's coordinator for certain hemisphere intelligence matters.



Adolph A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, was involved in Comint planning early in the war.

USCG. The FBI disagreed. Berle concluded the meeting with the recommendation that higher level action be sought to prevent the proliferation of cryptanalytic organizations and that there should be better coordination among the existing ones.

On 8 April 1942, this subject was addressed by the Interdepartmental Intelligence Conference (IIC), an MID-ONI-FBI exchange group that grew out of the Delimitations Agreement of 5 June 1940. J. Edgar Hoover requested a special conference on Comint and the IIC members then appointed a subcommittee to consider intercept, processing and dissemination. Members of the subcommittee were to be D. M. Ladd, FBI, Colonel John T. Bissell, MID, Commander Redman, Director of Naval Communications (OP-20-G was subordinate to the DNC) and LtCommander Kramer, ONI.<sup>5</sup> The members were to determine if the Army, Navy (which now included the USCG) and FBI could handle the entire Comint field, to the exclusion of the COI, FCC and other agencies. Thus the FCC, an organization that was then conducting and would continue to conduct extensive intercept operations, was excluded from basic planning.

<sup>5</sup>Kramer was officially in ONI but indefinitely attached to OP-20-G.



John R. Redman headed OP-20-G, the naval Comint organization, from Feb-Oct 1942.

The subcommittee which formally met on 21 April and 25 May 1942, prepared a report which surveyed the existing cryptanalytic organizations and made recommendations as to processing of intercept and dissemination. Dissemination of the finished product was to be as follows:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Recipient</i>
Diplomatic	Army, Navy, State, President
Enemy Naval	Navy
Enemy Military	Army
Western Hemisphere	
Clandestine	Army, Navy, State, FBI
International Clandestine	Army, Navy, State <sup>6</sup>

Among the War Department signatories was William F. Friedman of the SIS.

The Subcommittee prepared another report on 30 June 1942. This was to be the basic national wartime agreement concerning cryptanalytic responsibilities. The report was signed by representatives of MID and SIS;

<sup>6</sup>COI was initially included instead of the State Department. In 1941, Captain James Roosevelt, COI liaison officer, had been on distribution for USCG Comint.

OP-20-G, USCG and ONI; and the FBI. The following allocation was made:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Organization Responsible for Cryptanalysis</i>
Diplomatic	Army
Enemy Naval Operations	Navy
Enemy Military Operations	Army
Western Hemisphere	Navy and FBI
Clandestine	
International Clandestine	Navy
Trade Codes	To be assigned by committee
Army Weather	Army
Navy Weather	Navy
Domestic Criminal	FBI
Voice Broadcast	FBI
Cover Text Communications <sup>7</sup>	FBI

The agreement also provided for the creation of a standing committee on cryptanalysis to be composed of representatives of the FBI technical laboratory, OP-20-G and SIS.

The agreements were forwarded to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Joint Intelligence Committee (a higher body than the IIC). The JCS then recommended to the President that he limit U.S. cryptanalysis to the Army, Navy and FBI. The President was also advised that the services had reached agreements among themselves. In a memorandum to the Director of the Budget dated 8 July 1942, the President ordered that cryptanalysis be limited to the Army, Navy and FBI and that the cryptanalytic units of the FCC, OSS and Director of Censorship be terminated.

In the meantime, \_\_\_\_\_ had ended his collaboration with OP-20-G's USCG unit regarding Western Hemisphere clandestine traffic and had entered into an exclusive arrangement with the FBI.

The significance of these agreements, especially as related to the division of cryptanalytic responsibilities, should not be over-emphasized. Even without a formal agreement, the Navy would have dealt with foreign naval systems and the Army foreign military systems. Of greatest significance was the decision to concentrate all diplomatic cryptanalysis and processing in the SIS.<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>7</sup>This included coded communications detected by postal or cable censors.

<sup>8</sup>As in 1940, the Army was still not in a position to significantly exploit Axis military communications. This would soon change.

matter of clandestine traffic was destined to remain unsolved because of lack of Navy-FBI cooperation and the constant disputes between those organizations regarding their relationship with the British. Nevertheless, the 1942 agreements were a beginning and they remained in effect throughout the war, their importance declining as other arrangements were made.

Mr. Benson, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and the George Washington University, is currently writing a history of U.S. Communications Intelligence organization, policy and coordination during World War II, under a Cryptologic Education Fellowship with the National Cryptologic School Press.