

# 8

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~ 28 August 1953

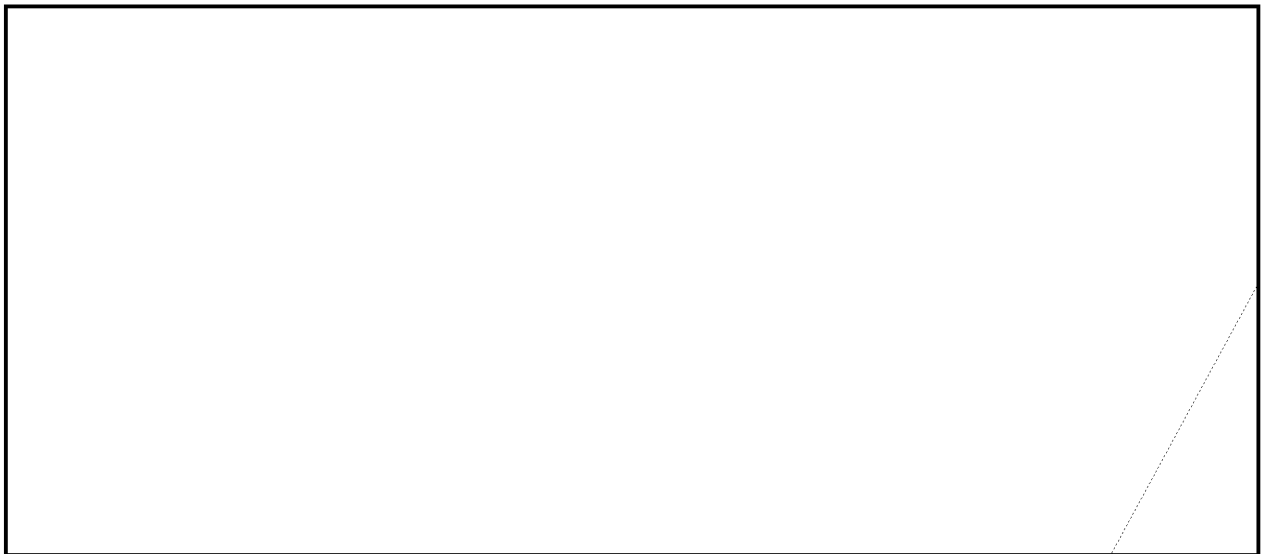
~~TOP SECRET CANOE - SECURITY INFORMATION~~

**THE POTENTIALITIES OF COMINT AS A SOURCE  
OF WARNING OF THE IMMINENCE OF HOSTILITIES**

1. The value to the Allies of our Signal Intelligence effort during World War II can scarcely be overestimated. Through the reading of high-grade German and Japanese ciphers, we were able to penetrate the enemy lines and enter the Headquarters of High Commands, Army Groups, and Armies. On a strategic level, "Special Intelligence"<sup>1</sup> was the unique source of advance knowledge of the enemy's plans for both offensive and defensive operations. It was the timeliest, most complete, and most reliable source of intelligence on his Order of Battle, intentions, and capabilities.

On the tactical level, reading of medium and low-grade ciphers, traffic analysis, and direction-finding provided a rapid flow of operational intelligence in the field. The value of operational intelligence from those sources was proved again during the conflict in Korea, and the vital part which COMINT<sup>2</sup> will play in the event of a third world war of reasonably conventional duration cannot now be in any serious doubt.

The role of COMINT as a source of advance warning of the outbreak of such a war is, however, highly problematic.



<sup>1</sup> The wartime cover name for intelligence resulting from successful crypt-analytic attack on high-grade cipher systems.

<sup>2</sup> The term COMINT, as it is used today, includes both the "Special Intelligence" of World War II and all other intelligence which may be derived from the radio communications activities of a foreign government - medium and low-grade cipher messages, plain language transmissions, radio telephone conversations, traffic analysis, and direction-finding.

EO 3.3(h)(2)

PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

Declassified and approved for release by NSA on 01-09-2014 pursuant to E.O. 13526

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

20 August 1953



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

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~ ~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~ 28 August 1953



<sup>1</sup> A study of the conduct of operations on the Eastern Front in World War II provides us also with overwhelming evidence of the lengths to which the Soviets will go in order to gain all the advantages of initial surprise. For example, in order to deny the enemy any information concerning the fire plan for an attack on a small sector of the Finnish Front, Russian units spent six weeks preparing their positions under the difficult conditions of complete secrecy. Their success was such that the Germans lost 75% of their total casualties in the first five minutes of the artillery barrage.

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

20 August 1953

about to be launched against the United States. For, as far as the USSR is concerned, those sources are plain text messages and traffic analysis.

Plain language messages contain only information which is considered by the originator to be unclassified. They may provide a strong indication of widespread industrial mobilization, or a striking item,

[REDACTED]

intelligence picture being constructed from all sources.

[REDACTED]

The sophistication of Soviet security techniques has been clearly demonstrated. During World War II, the Soviets achieved noteworthy successes in radio deception. The hope that analysis of their radio traffic, unsupported by far more positive evidence, will reveal a strategic intention cannot seriously be entertained.

The potentialities of COMINT which includes "Special Intelligence" require a completely different evaluation.

[REDACTED]

The potentialities of a COMINT organization which does not lack the most important COMINT source are so great that the difficulties involved in providing it with that source can scarcely be considered a deterrent factor. Nor should the benefits which it could reasonably

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

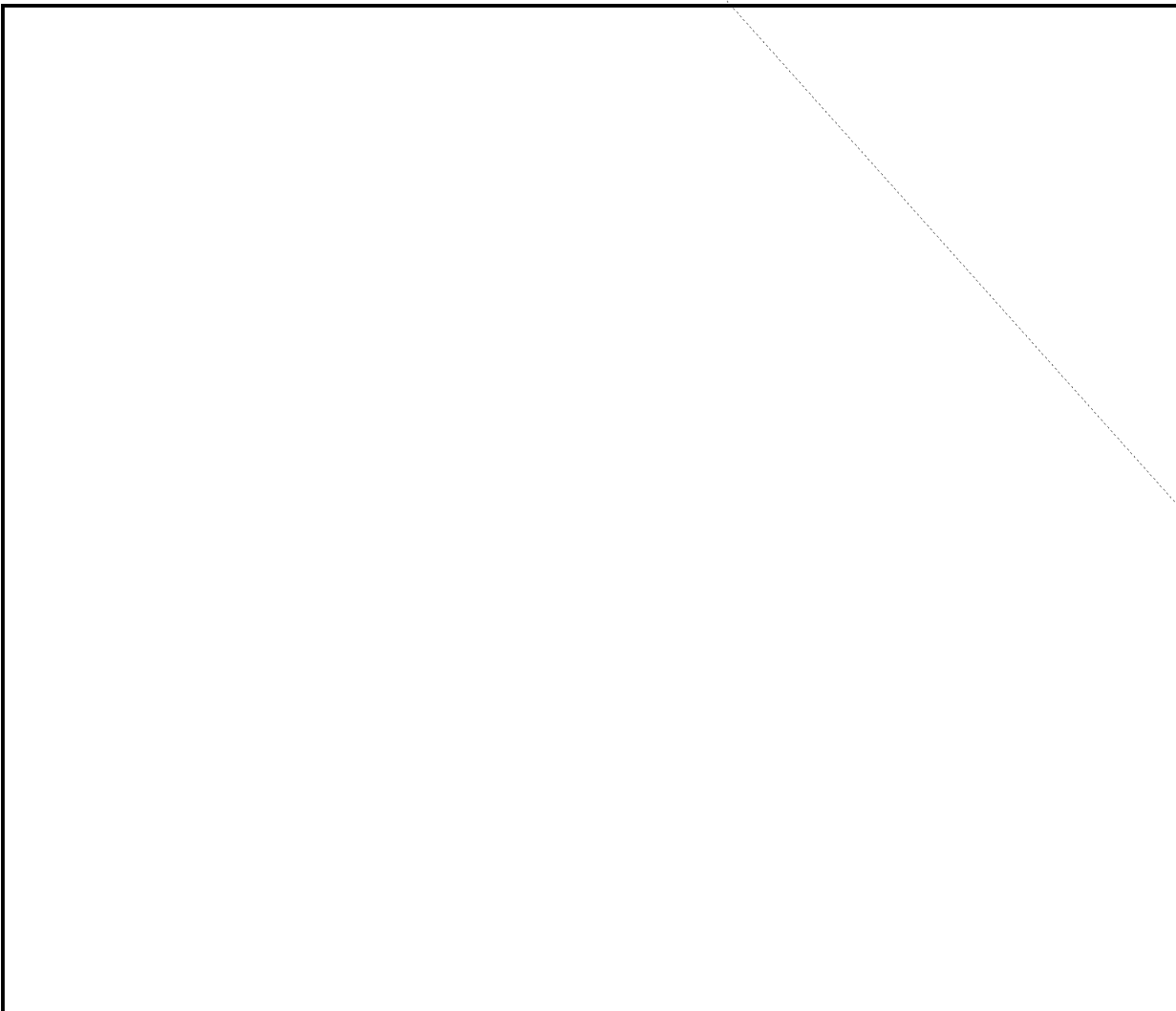
~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

20 August 1953

EO 3.3(h)(2)

promise be discounted on the grounds that such an organization would not have the demonstrable capability of furnishing specific warning that hostilities were about to be initiated. It is beyond the power of any COMINT organization to guarantee in advance that it will produce a specific piece of information, since, even if it could obtain and read all the messages originated by a foreign nation, still it could not write them.



<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, in the absence of readable messages from the area, the nature and extent of that build up, if, in fact, it did occur, has not been settled by traffic analysis in five years.

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~

~~TOP SECRET CANOE~~ 28 August 1953

that the evidence available was by no means sufficient to guarantee that the conclusion was sound.



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

*Carolyn J. Fox*  
CAROLYN J. FOX