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8 January 1952

REPORT BY THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON

PLAIN TEXT PROCESSING

to the

CHIEF, OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

on the

PROCESSING OF PLAIN TEXT TRAFFIC WITHIN AFSA-02

THE PROBLEM

1. To determine the most effective means of processing and exploiting plain text traffic within AFSA-02 and to recommend such organizational changes as may be necessary to achieve optimum results.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM AND DISCUSSION

2. See Enclosure "A".

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that:
  - a. AFSA-26 be composed of two branches AFSA-261, [REDACTED]

- b. AFSA-23 supply AFSA-262 with all decrypted versions of [REDACTED]

communications.

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- c. Two copies of all [REDACTED] concerns be obtained where possible; one for AFSA-242 for traffic analysis purposes and one for AFSA-26 for informational exploitation.

- d. AFSA-2, and AFSA-26 contribute personnel to be permanently assigned to AFSA-262.

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- e. AFSA-262 to be physically located within AFSA-23 spaces.
- f. The last two recommendations be reviewed and revised when sufficient linguistic personnel become available.
- g. AFSA-213 remain a part of AFSA-21.

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~~TOP SECRET~~ENCLOSURE AFACTS HEARING ON THE PROBLEM AND DISCUSSION

1. On 6 November 1951, the Chief, AFSA-02, directed AFSA-202 to form an ad hoc committee to study the plain text problem as it exists in AFSA-02. Such a committee was formed and consisted of Commander Cole, AFSA-25, Dr. Shinn, AFSA-24, Commander Knepper, AFSA-23, Mr. Robb, AFSA-202, and Lt. Brain, AFSA-202, as members. The study was to encompass (a) the advisability of elevating AFSA-246 to divisional status, (b) the desirability of combining all plain text processing, both in AFSA-23 and AFSA-24, into the proposed new division and, (c) the possible inclusion of AFSA-213 in the proposed new division, and if AFSA-213 is included, then some decision was to be reached regarding the disposition of AFSA-211.

2. The term plain text (P/T) as used in this report includes all

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3. The Committee held a series of meetings with representatives of AFSA-21, AFSA-261, (formerly AFSA-246), AFSA-242, and AFSA-25, who gave short talks on the processing of plain text traffic in their divisions and branches. In addition, two special meetings were held. At the first,

in plain text processing. Members of the Operational Management Board were invited and attended. A second special meeting was held at which representatives of the consumers were in attendance. Their views were obtained as to what they expected of AFSA in the way of plain text intelligence and the degree to which

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we are satisfying those expectations. A stenographer was present at all meetings and transcripts of the proceedings are either already available or can be made available on short notice.

4. On 7 December 1951, AFSA-246 was redesignated as AFSA-261 by order of the Chief, AFSA-02. Therefore, the Committee confined its study to the two remaining problems mentioned in paragraph 1 (b) and (c) above. However, it is the opinion of the Committee that the formation of AFSA-261 offers certain potential disadvantages which quite possibly outweigh any benefits which may be expected to be derived.

First, the step results in a positive split in the Russian COMINT problem and of such degree that the parts are not organizationally recombined short of the AFSA-02 level. Redistribution of effort, exchange of personnel and exchange of information now must pass through two echelons. At the moment this may be feasible and may not result in undesirable delays and confusion. The scene has, however, been set for imbroglios in the future. It is the belief of the Committee that a split in a coordinated Russian effort is undesirable in principle.

Second, AFSA-261 constitutes the major reserve of trained Russian linguists. The state of effort in the Russian cryptanalytic problem does not permit the maintenance of adequate linguistic reserves. There simply is not sufficient linguistic work to support them or train them. In the event of cryptanalytic successes the plans of AFSA-24 call for the transfer of linguistic personnel from the present AFSA-261. At present, this would still be feasible, within the limitations expressed in our first reservation but it is considered quite possible that in the future, space requirements and organizational segregation could bring about a degree of physical separation which would be disastrous. Certainly the temptation to operate AFSA-261

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at some entirely different site would be augmented by its organizational split from AFSA-24.

Third, it is the opinion of the Committee that this segregation will of necessity result in an unnecessary and hence undesirable increase in administrative expenditure.

Fourth, the Committee fails to find material advantages to be gained as a result of the creation of AFSA-261.

5. The Committee feels that many of the objections set forth may apply with equal weight to other national problems.

6. The Committee feels that since the entire effort of AFSA-213 is devoted to the scanning of  operationally and functionally it could be a part of AFSA-26. However, due to (a) the existence of adequate operational control, (b) space limitations which prohibit its geographical proximity to AFSA-26, and (c) the desirability of centralized machine maintenance, it is felt that the present arrangement need not be disturbed.

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7. The presentation by AFSA-23 of their plain text processing procedures brought out the following main points:

a. The close relationship that exists between ALLO cipher and plain language processing.

b. The extreme shortage of linguists necessary for cipher, plain text, and other translations.

8. Throughout the presentation by AFSA-23, each individual expressed the belief that to separate ALLO plain text processing from cipher traffic processing would be very undesirable. They stated that the problems in AFSA-23 today require a close working arrangement between plain text and cipher processing even to the point that the same person works on both. Use of

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plain text messages as collateral for cryptanalytic purposes is quite extensive but perhaps an even more important point is that there are many instances where it is necessary to read both the plain text and cipher traffic of a given country or area in order to arrive at a reasonably accurate intelligence picture. This is particularly true in the case of [redacted], or as the Committee feels it should be called,

[redacted] There are numerous instances of questions being asked in plain language with the answer given in cipher. In some systems, the same set of consecutive serial numbers used for cipher messages may be used in plain text, (viz., numbers 2821-2831 are cipher messages while 2832 may be a plain text message). The above seem to be valid reasons for close collaboration between plain text and cipher processing. Taken by themselves, or collectively, they do not constitute an overwhelming argument against separating plain text from cipher processing provided suitable arrangements were made to effect the close liaison and interchange of traffic, intelligence, and ideas made necessary by such a separation.

9. The number of problems handled in AFSA-23 make it necessary to utilize the available linguists in plain text, cipher, and other translation work and, in many instances, in cryptanalytic and related duties. In most cases to withdraw any of these linguists for work on plain text alone would seriously hamper the cipher work being done on problems where linguists are in short supply.

10. The Committee is satisfied that in general the present method of processing and exploiting Russian plain text is probably as good as can be expected when consideration is given to the lack of adequate space and personnel. The Committee feels, however, that some benefit might be derived by a clearer arrangement for the processing of [redacted] in which AFSA 242 would exploit it as traffic analysis material and AFSA-261 for

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11. As now organized the processing of [redacted] text communications is multiply subdivided. Traffic of Russian origin is the problem and responsibility of AFSA-261. All other [redacted] traffic is the responsibility of AFSA-23. Within AFSA-23, this material is further subdivided by nationality and separately worked. For the [redacted] AFSA 23 has a central desk for coordination of effort but the actual choice of messages and mechanics of processing are delegated linguistically by section. This tends to isolate the AFSA 23 material from the efforts and personnel of AFSA 261. It is the opinion of the Committee that the [redacted] problem is probably the only segment where at the present time and under present conditions, both AILLO and RU plain text processing could be merged into one homogeneous unit.

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12. The Committee recommends that AFSA--26 be composed of two Branches, AFSA-261, Russian Internal Plain Text and AFSA-262, All Plain Text [redacted] AFSA-23 and AFSA 26 would contribute personnel to be permanently assigned to AFSA 262. Because of the acute shortage of qualified linguists a certain number of additional personnel would be made available on a loan basis to meet the needs of AFSA-262, but would remain administratively under AFSA 23. This branch would be physically located within AFSA 23 spaces. This arrangement should be revised when sufficient linguistic personnel become available. In order for AFSA - 262 to properly carry out its mission it will be necessary for AFSA-23 to supply them with all decrypted versions of [redacted] communications. It is also recommended that two copies of all [redacted] be obtained. One to AFSA-242 for T/A purposes and one to AFSA-26 for informational exploitation.

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