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Chapter 10

SIGINT in Crisis, 1967-1969

After the relatively placid decade of the 1950s, the 1960s produced a series of international paroxysms unmatched in post-World War II history. Although cryptology was involved in virtually all the events, four crises in late decade had particular impact on the cryptologic business. The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was a defining moment in cryptologic contributions to the intelligence picture. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and the accompanying crisis concerning Romania, helped shape SIGINT production and reporting in later years. The other two events, the capture of the *Pueblo* in 1968 and the shootdown of the naval EC-121 in 1969, were uniquely cryptologic in their origins and implications, and they changed the way NSA and the cryptologic community have done business from that day to this.

SIGINT AND THE SECOND ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

The Suez Crisis of 1956 and the Lebanon Crisis of 1958 had turned NSA's attention to the Middle East and had begun the buildup of American cryptologic capabilities in the region. This involvement was to grow steadily as NSA sought to keep track of the situation and the intentions of the Arab governments.

On the Arab side, the late 1950s marked the height of pan-Arab sentiment. In 1958 Egypt's Nasser had convinced Syria to join Egypt in forming the United Arab Republic (UAR). But the idea never worked. Syrians chafed under heavy-handed Egyptian bureaucratic regimentation. In 1961 Nasser, believing that state socialism was the only true path, nationalized virtually all manufacturing, banking, and utilities. He also reduced to 100 acres the amount of land that a farmer could own, and he put a ceiling on the amount of money that a citizen could earn. This was too much for the Syrians, and two months later a military coup in Damascus ended the Syrian involvement in the union. Nasser, hoping that another Arab state would take Syria's place, obstinately kept the name (UAR), but none did.¹

Three years later a new transnational organization emerged. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formally established at a conference in Jerusalem in 1964 with Ahmed Shukeiri as its head. It formed a conventional army composed of Palestinians and their Arab sympathizers throughout the Middle East. The real power, however, developed around a guerrilla movement called al-Fatah, headed by Yasir Arafat.²

A low-intensity Fatah-Israeli conflict developed almost immediately. It was punctuated by cross-border raids and terrorist bombings, and each incident led to reprisals

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which created the foundation for the next incident. At the same time, the ambitious Nasser was becoming enmeshed in a civil war in Yemen in which the other proxy was Saudi Arabia. This created strains in the Arab world and accentuated the division between the so-called Nasserists and the more conservative Arab governments like Saudi Arabia and the Arabian desert sheikdoms.

By early 1967 the Middle East was clearly about to boil over. Terrorism was at a high level, and Nasser seemed spoiling for a fight. Then on 14 May NSA detected UAR air defense forces going on full alert. Three days later, on 17 May, Nasser demanded the withdrawal of UN forces from Gaza, and UN troops immediately began evacuating what was obviously to become a war zone. On 23 May Nasser took the warlike step of blockading the Straits of Tiran, and he announced that Israeli commercial shipping, whether in Israeli or foreign bottoms, would be stopped.³

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)(d)

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The Cryptologic Posture

By 1967 the American cryptologic posture in the Middle East had improved dramatically. From a single station on Cyprus only recently taken over from CIA in 1956, the cryptologic community had collection sites in [redacted] Crete, [redacted], and Cyprus, as well as collection from Asmara, Vint Hill, and Cheltenham. Navy and Air Force airborne collection platforms flew regularly in the eastern Mediterranean, [redacted]

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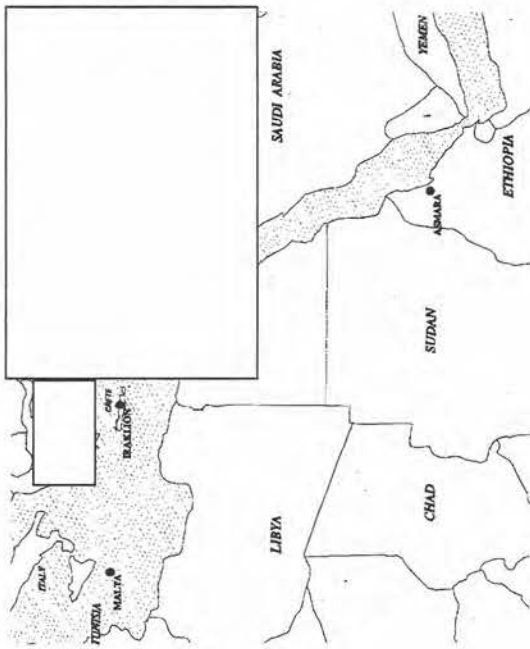
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The Middle East in 1967

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Prior to Nasser's eviction of UN forces from Sinai, there was no consensus in the U.S. on the likelihood of war. A National Intelligence Estimate published in April assessed that there was no near-term likelihood of war in the region. In May, State/INR assessed Egyptian military activities as defensive. Thomas Hughes, the top State Department intelligence analyst, based much of his estimate

Walter Rostow, President Johnson's national security advisor, was hopeful that things could still be resolved by negotiation, and he noted that the Soviet Union did not seem to want to get directly involved.⁵

However, the cryptologic community had begun a series of SIGINT alerts as early as November 1966.

NSA expanded the alert to include the entire Middle East. This was quickly elevated to a SIGINT Readiness Bravo when Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran on 23 May. A Bravo was as high as the SIGINT readiness system could proceed short of war.⁶ By the accounts of all involved, it was no longer a question of *if*, but *when*.⁷



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To further bolster collection in the eastern Mediterranean, NSA decided on 23 May (the day Nasser blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba) to deploy a TRS. [redacted] and realizing that even combined Air Force and Navy airborne collection could not produce round-the-clock coverage, NSA diverted the USS *Liberty* to an eastern Mediterranean cruise. The *Liberty* was selected because of its superior cruising speed (18 knots, best of all the TRSs), its multichannel collection suite, and its availability. (It had just begun a cruise and was fitted out for an extended voyage.)

Meanwhile, SIGINT indicators of impending war poured in. [redacted]

[redacted]

The intelligence community had other sources of information, but none was as timely or authoritative during an expanding crisis such as existed in May of 1967.¹⁰ In many ways the war preparations of 1967 resembled Japanese war preparations in 1941, [redacted]

The entire Middle East was on the brink when, at 0745 Middle Eastern time on 5 June, Israel launched a preemptive strike on Egyptian air forces. In what became one of the classic offensive attacks in the annals of warfare, the Israelis destroyed virtually the entire UAR air force on the ground. Within a few hours, 309 out of 340 combat aircraft were in smoking ruins, including all 30 of its long-range TU-16 bombers. Unaware of how bad things were, Syria and Jordan jumped into the fray by launching attacks on Israel. But they were too late. No longer having to worry about the Egyptian air force, the Jewish state turned its attention to Syrian and Jordanian forces on its borders and to the Egyptian divisions massed in the Sinai. Having no protection in a desert environment, the ground forces were exposed and largely destroyed in three days. In all, 417 Arab aircraft were destroyed, 393 on the ground; only 26 Israeli aircraft were lost.¹¹

The White House first learned of the war from press sources. When the Situation Room called NSA for confirmation, they heard nothing for a time, but by mid-morning SIGINT reports were beginning to flood the wires. The Arabs and Israelis were making charges and countercharges, and the president wanted to know who fired the first shots.

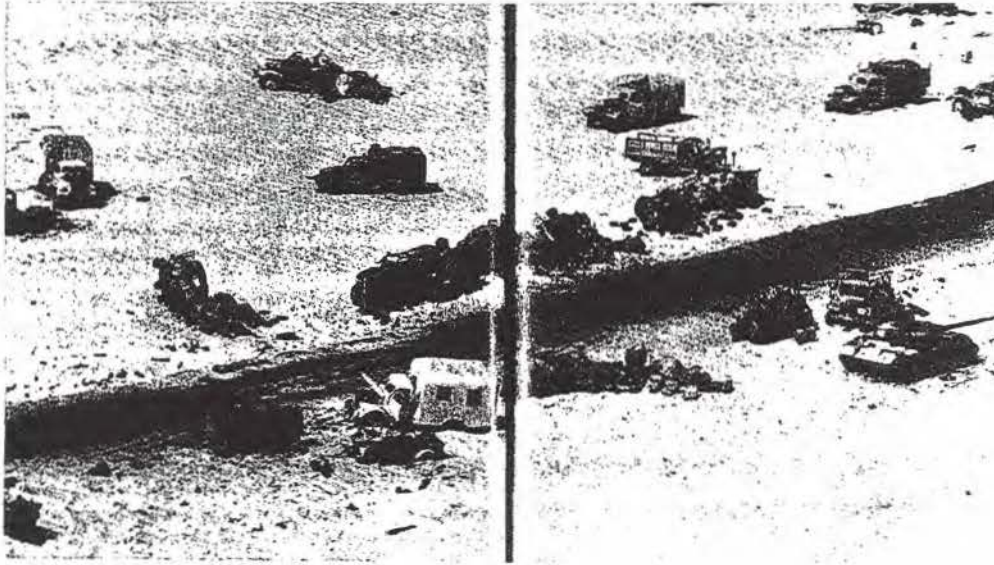
[redacted] reports were sufficient for presidential advisor Clark Clifford to make an initial determination that the Israelis attacked first. This judgment was to be confirmed many times over when all the evidence was sifted through.

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War in the desert. Shattered Egyptian tanks smolder in the Sinai desert.

Amid the conflagration in the desert, the Johnson administration kept its eyes on the Soviet Union. What would the Soviets do?

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[Redacted]

To White House analysts, it appeared that the Soviets were willing to fully support Arab governments with equipment but were not willing to send troops. The Arab governments misread the Soviet attitude, [Redacted] Nasser jumped into war without understanding that he would have to go it alone. Once the war began, the Egyptians and Syrians expected intervention - what they got was an emergency shipment of equipment to replace that which the Israelis had destroyed. The arms deliveries began almost immediately [Redacted]

[Redacted]

On 6 June, the Egyptians and Syrians claimed that U.S. and British forces had provided air cover for the attacking Israelis. This sensational charge, repeated and believed throughout the Arab world, was apparently intended to provoke Soviet intervention, an event that could have produced a dangerous American-Soviet confrontation. But Kosygin rejected the claim outright. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Nasser was furious, but he did not succeed in egging the USSR closer to involvement. That same day, Kosygin contacted Washington on the hotline and pledged to work toward peace. As the succeeding days unfolded and Israel pressed toward the Suez Canal, Kosygin's talks with the Johnson administration over the hotline became more testy, but direct negotiations played a key role in American and Soviet abilities to avoid military involvement.¹⁶

Fighting finally terminated on the tenth. [Redacted]

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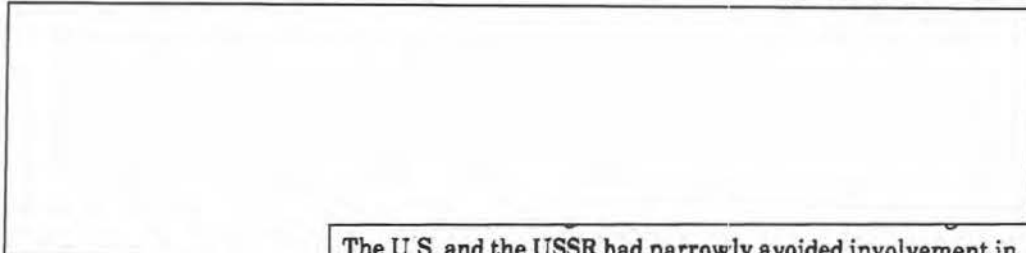
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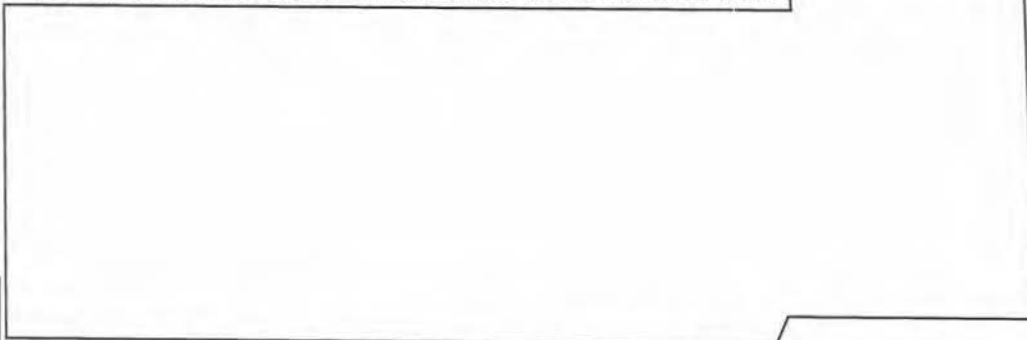


The U.S. and the USSR had narrowly avoided involvement in the Middle East War, [redacted]

Missing from the postmortems were the usual breast-beatings about why intelligence failed to warn. In 1967 it did not fail. [redacted]

[redacted] American intelligence generally downplayed the possibility of an Arab attack; the best possibility, and the one which actually played out, was an Israeli preemptive strike like the dash to the Suez in 1956.²⁰

The 1967 war was the closest that the United States and the Soviet Union came to war between the Cuban Missile Crisis and the end of the Cold War. [redacted]



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The Attack on the Liberty

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The *Liberty*, NSA's choice as the TRS deployment to the Middle East, was a reconditioned World War II *Victory* ship, converted to an AC/TR in 1964. The vessel already had five cruises under its belt. It had 20 intercept positions, 6 officers, a SIGINT crew of 125 and an overall complement of 172 men. With TRSSCOM, ship-to-shore radiotelephone circuits, and two receive terminals for fleet broadcasts, the *Liberty* was one of the best equipped ships in the TRS inventory. The Navy approved NSA's request, and the *Liberty*, off the west coast of Africa, steamed for Rota, where it took aboard an additional 9 linguists, including 3 NSA civilians, and more keying material for its communications circuits. On the second of June, it set off for the eastern Mediterranean.²¹

The *Liberty's* sailing order specified that it was to stay at least 12.5 miles off the coast of the UAR and 6.5 miles from Israel. When war broke out on 5 June, the Sixth Fleet, to which the *Liberty* had been temporarily attached, was directed to remain at least 100 miles

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off the coasts of Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and the UAR, but the *Liberty's* instructions were not changed. When it arrived in its operating area late on 7 June, Captain McGonagle, the vessel's commander, still had written instructions that brought the *Liberty* close into the coast.²²

Nasser's charge on 6 June that the U.S. and Britain were providing air cover for the Israelis, and the possibility that the Soviets might intervene, brought new orders to the Sixth Fleet to stand off at least 200 miles from the eastern Mediterranean littoral. The next day the JCS decided to pull the *Liberty*, the only U.S. naval vessel still in the far eastern Mediterranean, back to at least 20 nautical miles from the UAR and 15 from Israel. Later that day JCS changed again, this time to 100 nautical miles from both countries.²³

The first JCS message never reached the *Liberty* - an Army communications center misrouted it to a naval communications station in the Pacific. When, an hour later, the Joint Reconnaissance Center of the JCS decided to pull the *Liberty* back to 100 nautical miles, a series of communications fiascos occurred which stretched on into the night. Message misroutings, delays occasioned by the press of other business, refusals by the Navy to transmit based on a verbal order, all combined to delay the message receipt until after the attack. It was a repeat of the warning message to Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and there was blame aplenty.²⁴

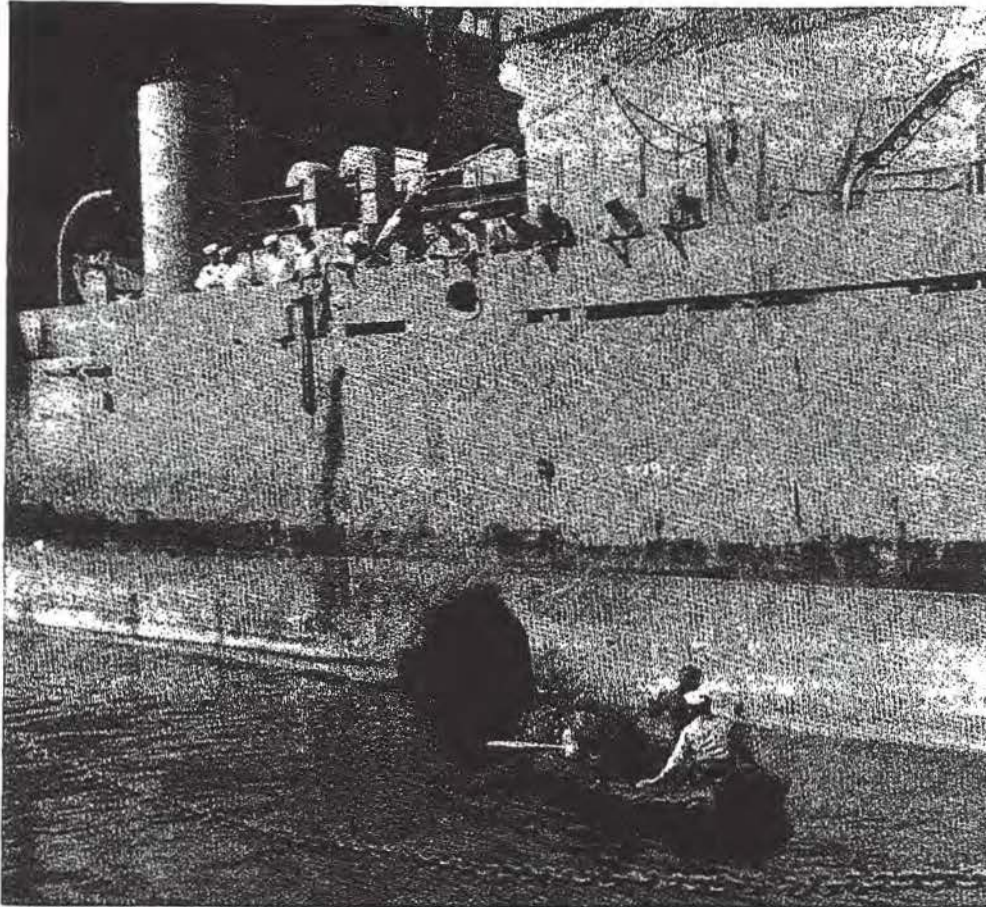
The *Liberty* was reconnoitered by several unidentified aircraft during the morning hours of 8 June. That afternoon it was about twenty-five nautical miles north of the Egyptian city of Al Arish when, at about 1400 local, two French-built Israeli Dassault fighters veered toward the ship and began strafing it with cannon and rockets. The attack put some 821 rounds into the hull and superstructure, wounded McGonagle, and killed 8 crewmembers. The *Liberty* managed to get off a desperate message to Sixth Fleet before the power to the radio equipment went out, and Admiral Martin, the Sixth Fleet commander, launched 4 armed A-4 Skyhawks for air cover. Since his flagship was 450 nautical miles away from the *Liberty*, however, the aircraft did not arrive before 3 Israeli torpedo boats launched 2 torpedoes at about 1430. The torpedoes tore through the SIGINT spaces, killing 25 men and putting a hole in the hull 39 feet across. As the crew of the *Liberty* scrambled to keep the vessel afloat, one more crewmember was killed by machine-gun fire from 1 of the torpedo boats.²⁵

Once the torpedo boats departed, McGonagle directed his vessel to Malta. Sixth Fleet escorts reached the *Liberty* sixteen hours after the attack and trailed the vessel, picking up classified and cryptographic keying material escaping from the hole in the hull. The *Liberty* limped into Malta on 14 June after a heroic struggle to stay afloat that eventually earned McGonagle the Medal of Honor. In all, thirty-four crewmembers were killed, including one NSA civilian Arabic linguist, Allen Blue. The men lost their lives in a war

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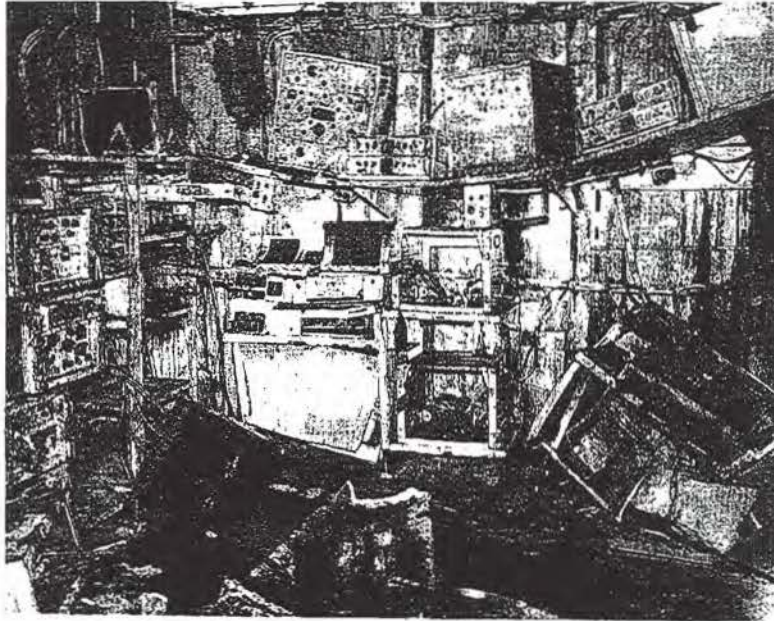


The Liberty at Malta after the attack

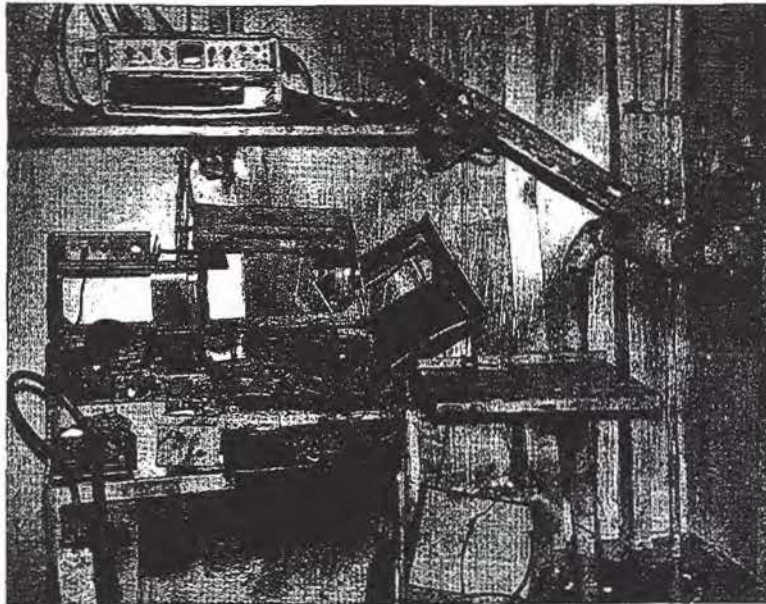
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The Liberty SIGINT compartment



Another view

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in which the U.S. was not a combatant because of errors in a military communications system that, by 1967, could no longer do the job.

At NSA, word of the attack reached Director Marshall Carter at 0915 Washington time. The telephone began ringing almost at once, as word of the attack spread through Washington. While Carter was directing intercept coverage reallocation, Secretary of Defense McNamara called him (at 1015) to ask for details on the vessel and the voyage so that he could make a statement to the press. Deputy Director Louis Tordella took charge of devising a cover story. Carter diverted many of the queries to NSG. At one point during the day the director got a call from the Joint Reconnaissance Center suggesting that the vessel be sunk. Carter replied that this was the worst thing they could do - heaps of classified documents and equipment would end up in shallow water. He was right, and McGonagle's heroic piloting of his vessel to moorage in Malta saved what could have become a much worse situation.²⁶

Lyndon Johnson got word at 0949. At the time the U.S. still did not know the identity of the attackers, but the White House soon found out through a Defense Attaché Office message from Tel Aviv that the Israeli navy had admitted the error. This presented the president with a very touchy dilemma. Because of Arab charges that the U.S. had assisted the Israelis, the Sixth Fleet was standing far away from the conflict in the central Mediterranean. Yet here, unannounced, was an American naval vessel only a few miles off the coast of Israel, in the middle of a war zone. Johnson's first concern was about Soviet reaction. He had Walt Rostow send a message to Kosygin stating that the Israelis had apparently fired on a U.S. ship in error and that the Sixth Fleet was sending ships and planes to investigate (he repeated it twice). Kosygin replied that he had passed the message to Nasser.²⁷

Meantime, the Pentagon had released a statement about the attack, indicating that the *Liberty's* mission was to "assure communications between U.S. Government posts in the Middle East and to assist in relaying information concerning the evacuation of American dependents and other American citizens from countries in the Middle East."²⁸ This was the cover story that NSA had devised under hurried circumstances. It didn't work, but like the U-2 incident in 1960, no cover story would have worked in the situation. The press very quickly sniffed out the truth, which was attributed to an anonymous military officer that the *Liberty* was a "spy ship." According to this source, "Russia does the same thing. We moved in close to monitor the communications of both Egypt and Israel. We have to. We must be informed of what's going on in a matter of minutes."²⁹ The assertion was denied by official sources, but the true mission of the *Liberty* was never in doubt again. (The vessel did not, in fact, have an Israeli mission, because linguists were too scarce.)

How did the the incident happen? Was it a deliberate attack by Israel, as has been alleged countless times by many people? (Even General Carter believed it to have been deliberate.) If it was an accident, how could the Israelis have possibly misidentified the

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ship? The *Liberty* was flying an American flag, was clearly marked on the hull "AGTR-5," and when the first flag was shot down by the attacking fighters, McGonagle hoisted the largest flag he had aboard, a holiday ensign seven by thirteen feet. This enormous flag was flying above the *Liberty* when the torpedo boats executed their attack.³⁰

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

The idea that the attack was deliberate turned out to be wrong. Although there was no SIGINT bearing directly on the attack, there was a [] report shortly after the incident dealing with the aftermath. It reported air/ground conversations between a ground controller at Hatsor and two Israeli helicopters which reconnoitered the *Liberty* as it was turning toward Malta. Hatsor first identified the vessel as Egyptian, but later became unsure, and requested that the helicopter crews "verify the first man that you [bring up] as to what nationality he is." A few minutes later Hatsor instructed: "Pay attention: if they speak [B-val Arabic] and are Egyptians take them to Al Arish. If they speak English and are not Egyptians, take them to Lydda . . . the first thing is for you to clarify what nationality they are." Two minutes later Hatsor asked, "Did it clearly signal an American flag?" And a minute later, "Requesting that you make another pass and check again whether it is really an American flag."

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One can imagine the panic at Israeli naval headquarters at the time. They had apparently attacked a vessel of their closest ally.

Based on this report, Rostow told Johnson that the Israelis appeared to be confused about the nationality of the vessel, and he suggested that there might have been some breakdown within the Israeli military which resulted in the attack.³¹

The official Israeli court of inquiry concluded on 21 July that it had in fact been an identification error. When the *Liberty* was first discovered by an Israeli spotter plane on the morning of the eighth, it was unidentified but possibly hostile, and a red marker was placed on the map in the naval war room. Later in the morning, the identification was tentatively changed to friendly (American), and a green marker replaced the red one. But the Israeli navy then went a period of time without a location, and someone, instead of retaining the green marker with a question mark, pulled it off the map entirely.³²

The shift changed at 1100 Israeli time, and the new shift knew nothing about the American vessel, which was no longer designated on the map. What they did know was that Israeli army units in the Sinai coastal town of Al Arish were reporting artillery bombardment from an unknown source. (It later turned out to be the explosion of an ammunition dump.) The Israelis began searching the sea for a possible hostile ship, and they found the *Liberty*. The crew of the vessel that did the identification claimed that its radar showed the ship to be heading at twenty-eight knots toward Suez (an impossible speed for the *Liberty* - an error by the radar operator), and Israeli naval control ordered an air attack. Two Mirage fighters on their way home from an air patrol over the Suez Canal were diverted to the spot where the supposed hostile was. After a quick pass, the pilots

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claimed that the ship was not displaying a flag (another error) and were ordered to execute an attack.

The torpedo boats arrived in the area at 1418. A low-flying aircraft had just radioed to its controller that he had seen a marking "CPR-5" on the hull. The naval controller told the torpedo boats to attempt a better identification, but the captain of one of the boats claimed that when he requested identification, the ship requested him to identify himself first. Based on identification aids available on board, it appeared to him to be the Egyptian supply vessel *El-Kasir*, and with this information in hand Israeli naval control again ordered an attack. After the first torpedo hit the boat, the markings "CTR-5" were observed on the hull. Control immediately terminated the attack, just before the torpedo boats were about to launch additional torpedoes that would have sunk the *Liberty*. An Israeli helicopter flying over the ship after the attack finally noticed an American flag, and the Israeli navy realized what it had done.³³

An Israeli court of inquiry, whose findings were kept secret at the time (but which were uncovered and published by two Israeli journalists in 1984), condemned the confusion, incompetence, and interservice rivalry that contributed to the attack. There was no finding of a deliberate attack, but there was plenty of blame for all the Israelis associated with the incident.

The Johnson administration was properly outraged. The State Department, in a scathing statement highly unusual for diplomats, called the attack "quite literally incomprehensible. As a minimum, the attack must be condemned as an act of military recklessness reflecting wanton disregard for human life." But Clark Clifford, who was appointed by the president to render a final judgment, called it an identification error. Clifford relied heavily on COMINT reports showing Israeli confusion about the identification; these would have been difficult to fake. Going into it with a preconceived notion that the Israelis must have known, he concluded that what was involved was "a flagrant act of gross negligence . . ." rather than a deliberate act.³⁴

This did not, of course, quiet the press. Journalists, both reputable and disreputable, supported the "deliberate attack" theory, and the legend arose, without basis in fact, that the Israelis wanted to blind American SIGINT sensors to their communications, both to keep them from finding out that Israel actually started the war and to keep secret a plan to launch an attack on Syria. (As was stated already, the vessel was not targeting Israeli communications and had no Hebrew linguists on board.) All these charges were repeated and embellished by James M. Ennes, a lieutenant aboard the *Liberty* who published a book on the subject in 1980. Most of the crew still believes that the attack was deliberate.³⁵

Many of the journalists properly questioned the position of the vessel at the time. Clifford, too, made a special point of this. The *Liberty* was clearly not where it should have been. The original plan was formulated before war broke out. Once the eastern Mediterranean became a battleground, it was decided to hold the *Liberty* out of the area,

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but the messages never reached McGonagle. The U.S. communications system was approaching breakdown; war sufficed to push it over the edge.

The crew, on the other hand, performed magnificently, and they and their vessel deserved better. NSA wanted to refurbish the ship and use it again, but the price tag of over \$10 million was too high. The *Liberty* was decommissioned a year after the attack, and in 1973 it was cut up for scrap in Baltimore's Curtis Bay Shipyard.³⁸ An abashed Israeli government paid \$13 million in compensation for the loss of life and damage to the vessel.

The attack on the *Liberty* should not be viewed as a bizarre, or even an especially unusual, identification error. Even in peacetime such errors are made all too frequently – the Soviet shootdown of KAL 007 and the American shootdown of an Iranian airliner are good examples. When a country is at war, the possibility of error is compounded by haste and fear. Losses to friendly fire always represent a substantial percentage of the casualties. And the Israeli agreement to compensate should not be taken as proof of guilty knowledge, but rather as an attempt to retain the friendship of a benefactor wronged.

THE PUEBLO

Any way you look at it this incident is a loser. We cannot come out even. We must cut our losses.

Clark Clifford, 29 January 1968

Nineteen sixty-eight was a bad year for the United States. It started with the Tet offensive in Vietnam and saw the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. As disaster piled on disaster, the only people truly happy were the media.

The very first disaster, however, was, for American cryptology, the worst. On 23 January North Korea captured a small SIGINT trawler from the TRS program called the *Pueblo*. It was everyone's worst nightmare, surpassing in damage anything that had ever happened to the cryptologic community.

Set-up

After a long lull following the Korean armistice, North Korea had become more aggressive. A clarion call of sorts sounded from the convention of the Korean Worker's Party in Pyongyang in October 1966, at which Kim Il-sung announced a campaign of hostile acts aimed at the "liberation" of South Korea and unification of South and North. This was followed by a dramatic rise in North Korean infiltration, terrorist incidents, and firefights along the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Between 1966 and 1967 incidents increased tenfold. On 21 January 1968 a group of thirty-one North Korean infiltrators attacked the South Korean presidential palace in hopes of assassinating President Park Chung-hee.

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This infamous Blue House incident raised tensions along the DMZ to their highest point since the armistice.³⁷

Into this not very auspicious situation intruded the latest in a series of TRS vessels. The *Pueblo* was first constructed in 1944 as an Army freight and supply vessel, and it was used to haul materials to South Pacific islands during the latter days of World War II. Decommissioned in 1954, it had sat in mothballs at Clatskanie, Oregon.

In 1966 the *Pueblo* rejoined the Navy, this time as a TRS. It was recommissioned at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington, and became the smallest version of the SIGINT ship, an AGER. The *Pueblo* carried just six positions and could make twelve to thirteen knots at top speed. Its new captain, Lieutenant Commander Lloyd M. Bucher, reported to take command in January 1967, while it was still undergoing refitting.³⁸

The captain and his crew were mismatched from the start. Bucher resented being jerked out of submarines to the surface navy. He knew nothing of electronic espionage and apparently learned little in his courtesy stop at NSA. His autobiographical account of the visit revealed considerable distaste for the mission and the people involved in it. Once on board, he found it difficult to get along with his executive officer, Lieutenant Edward Murphy. Moreover, he resented the operational control that Lieutenant Stephen Harris, the NSG-provided chief of the cryptologic spaces, had. To Bucher, not being in full control of his ship was intolerable.³⁹

The cryptologic crew was ill prepared for duty. Harris had a good background, including Russian language training and assignment on several NSG afloat detachments. But only two enlisted members had ever been to sea. The two Marine linguists who put aboard at Kami Seya (USN-39) were very green at Korean, and during the capture they could not understand the North Korean voice transmissions discussing the impending fate of their vessel. NSG had placed a vessel in harm's way without an advisory warning capability.⁴⁰

The way the AGER program was set up, NSA had little influence on the mission. The Navy tasked the vessels, and NSA provided technical support and suggested secondary tasking. Risk assessment for the voyage flowed through Navy channels up to DIA, which rendered the final judgment. By 1968 there were literally hundreds of missions worldwide every month, and there is no evidence that anyone put much thought into the *Pueblo's* first mission. The Navy assessed the risk as minimal, and DIA rubber-stamped it. The mission raised a few eyebrows at the 303 Committee (the organization that reviewed the monthly reconnaissance schedule), but the risk was not changed and the mission profile was not modified.⁴¹ Since the risk assessment process occurred over the year-end holidays, it probably received less scrutiny than was normal.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

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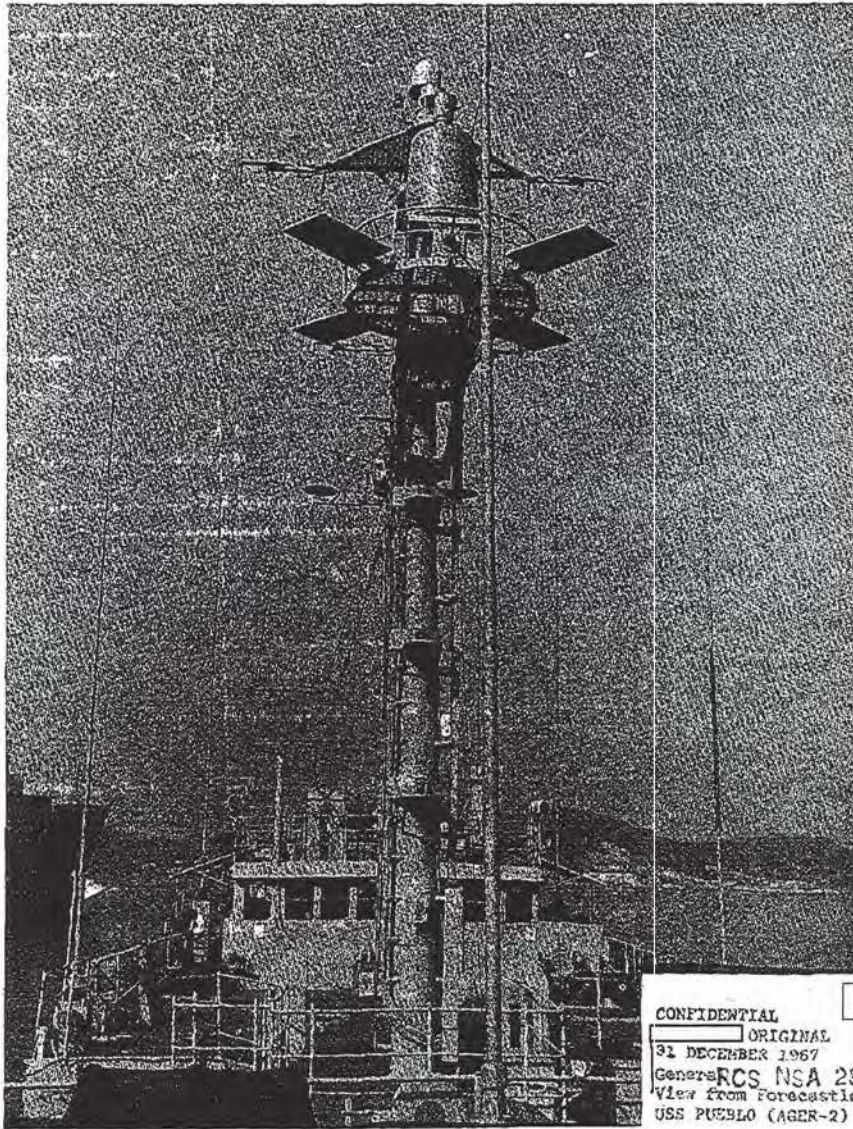


Lloyd Bucher (emerging from a hearing, with Stephen Harris, after repatriation in 1969)

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CONFIDENTIAL
 ORIGINAL
 31 DECEMBER 1967
 General RCS NSA 28
 View from Forecastle
 USS PUEBLO (AGER-2)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

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The Pueblo, before its voyage

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In fact, it should have raised some eyebrows. The North Koreans had of late shown unusual sensitivity to coastal vessels. Just twelve days before they took the *Pueblo*, the small North Korean navy had chased 300 ROK fishing boats south of the Northern Limit Line (NLL - a geographical extension of the 38th Parallel into the Sea of Japan), capturing two and capsizing a third. On the 20th North Korea summed up its grievances about coastal vessels to the UN Command, claiming that the other side was dispatching "spy boats disguised as fishing boats and villainous spies together with fleets of South Korean fishing boats."⁴²

Even prior to this, however, NSA had dispatched a message to the Joint Reconnaissance Center discussing the recent increased North Korean sensitivity in relation to the upcoming voyage of the *Pueblo*. JRC simply sent the message to CINCPAC, which paid no mind.⁴³

On 16 January, after putting out from Sasebo six days earlier, the *Pueblo* arrived at the northernmost point of its mission area and began slowly working its way south toward the port city of Wonsan. It had firm instructions to stay at least thirteen nautical miles off the coast, and there is no evidence to suggest that this order was ever violated. The crew was not having a happy trip, though. The seas had been rough almost every day since they had departed from San Diego in November, and the mission, which consisted of some very basic SIGINT sampling, had been dull and unproductive in the extreme.⁴⁴

Capture

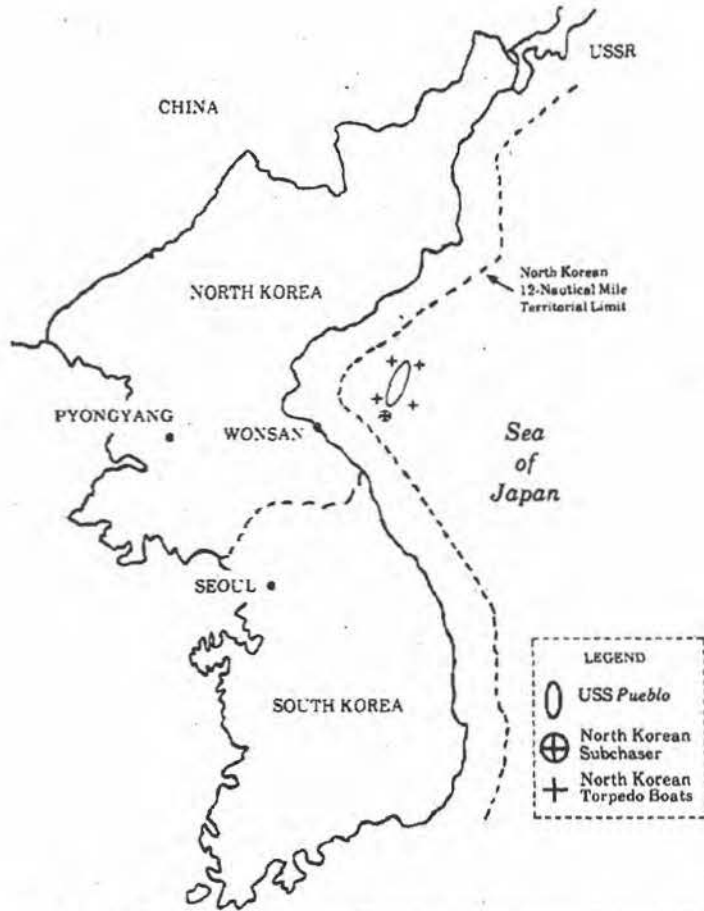
On the 20th, and again on the 22d, the *Pueblo* saw North Korean vessels that were close enough to note its position. Bucher was sure that he had been identified and broke mandatory radio silence to report this. At about noon on the 23d, a subchaser pulled up, and after requesting that the *Pueblo* identify itself, the subchaser reported back to his controller. Clearly, the North Koreans were by then certain that it was a surveillance ship of some kind, and after some minutes, during which time it was possible that Wonsan control radioed instructions, the subchaser requested the *Pueblo* to heave to. The *Pueblo* turned to flee, and the subchaser gave chase, joined by three torpedo boats.

The *Pueblo* radio room sent news of the incident to Kami Seya at Flash precedence. The *Pueblo* and the pursuing torpedo boats continued to play a game of tag, and for a time Bucher was successful in evading capture. But finally the subchaser got between the *Pueblo* and open ocean and opened fire. Almost simultaneously the torpedo boats opened up, and at this point Bucher very tardily ordered emergency destruction to begin. (One of the NCOs in the cryptologic spaces had already disobeyed an earlier Bucher order and had begun destroying things.) Finally Warrant Officer Lacy overrode a Bucher order and directed the ship to stop dead. The chase was over.⁴⁵

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Disposition of North Korean naval units and Pueblo during attack and seizure, 23 January 1968.

Map of the capture

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As the *Pueblo* limped slowly toward Wonsan, escorted by the North Korean vessels, the crew was below decks desperately trying to get rid of all the classified material. It was a futile effort. This ship had far more classified material than it should have had, and it was not equipped to destroy in an emergency even that which it was authorized. Lack of adequate equipment, confined spaces which prevented use of the most effective destruction techniques, and an inexperienced crew that had never practiced emergency destruction aboard the *Pueblo* combined to virtually nullify their efforts. When the ship was finally boarded, most of the material was still lying on the deck.⁴⁶

The boarding took place at 1445, almost three hours after the first North Korean vessel had been sighted. One crew member had been killed during a volley, and several, including Bucher, had been wounded. The radioman had succeeded in apprising Kami Seya of their predicament, and he kept the station updated until he had to go off the air to destroy crypto material. The *Pueblo* reached Wonsan at about 1900, after the harbor lights were already winking in the stillness. The crew was offloaded and placed in a captivity that would last almost a year.⁴⁷

Aftermath

In Kami Seya, things were anything but still. The unit had been on the line with the *Pueblo* for the better part of three hours, and it was frantically passing reports to Commander, Naval Forces Japan. But the initial reports failed to generate the appropriate concern there. Not until after hearing the phrase "we are being boarded" did the organization get itself mobilized. Mobilization, however, proved difficult. The quickest remedy would have been a flight of 5th Air Force fighters. But owing to the low risk assessment, no fighters were on alert, and it would have taken two to three hours to ready something. Adding flight time from Okinawa (where the aircraft were based), they could not have reached Wonsan before dark. Fifth Air Force F-4s in Korea were on SIOP alert and could not be rearmed in time. The carrier *Enterprise* was steaming south in the Sea of Japan on its way to Subic Bay when it got the distress call. But the *Enterprise* F-4s were armed with air-to-air missiles, and the time required to rearm and fly to Wonsan was too much. The *Enterprise* turned around and steamed toward Korea to rendezvous with other vessels headed for the same place, but none of them would be there in time. No help was available, and the U.S. military had to sit and watch.⁴⁸

The middle of the day in Japan was the middle of the night in Washington. Critic reports began arriving at NSA and the White House at about midnight. The senior operations officer called in Major General John Morrison, the assistant director for production, who hurried in to look at the traffic. Morrison called General Carter, who began directing the NSA response.⁴⁹

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At the White House, Walt Rostow, the national security advisor, came in first. After hasty calls to NSA and Hawaii to get more information, Rostow notified the president early in the morning. E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)(d)

Carter mobilized every SIGINT resource he could get his hands on, and assembled every scrap of paper that pertained. He called an Alpha Alert

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So within the cryptologic community, everyone was scrambling. But to the rest of the world Carter put up a stone wall. It was a Navy mission, and he directed that most of the questions be diverted to naval authorities and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rather than spread his cryptologic authority to encompass the *Pueblo*, Carter found it useful in this case to put the pressure on the Navy.⁵⁰

Now that the damage had been done, Carter wanted to assess what the damage was. Regarding COMINT, NSA's initial assessment was equivocal. Assuming that most COMINT documents had been destroyed before capture, NSA focused on the information that the crew might reveal under interrogation. It was potentially serious, but as yet unknowable. Regarding the COMSEC loss, however, NSA's conclusions, expressed initially only a day after the loss, were unmistakable: "The probable compromise of four major U.S. COMSEC equipments, including three of our modern electronic crypto-equipments, is a major intelligence coup without parallel in modern history." This was right on target as far as was known then, but the full extent of the loss was not known until the mid-1980s, as will be discussed below.⁵¹

At the White House, the *Pueblo* capture was one of those transcending crises that occupied the president. Before the end of the month, Lyndon Johnson had participated in at least thirteen full-dress meetings on the subject, and Robert McNamara, Clark Clifford (McNamara's designated replacement; 23 January was his first day on the job), Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and Earl Wheeler (chairman of the JCS) were all fully engaged until 30 January at which time the Tet Offensive cornered their attention.

The first meeting was the Tuesday lunch on 23 January. Discussions focused on where the *Pueblo* was when captured and what the United States could do about it. Inasmuch as it was too late to take the ship back, the group ran through several warlike options such as capturing a North Korean ship, hitting the North Koreans with U.S. forces, and augmenting U.S. forces in the Korean area. At this meeting the president articulated a feeling that came to dominate his thoughts - that the Soviet Union might be behind this and that it could be a "second front" designed to distract the U.S. from South Vietnam. There was no evidence to support this, just speculation.⁵²

Later that day Johnson phoned the Soviet Union on the hotline to complain about it. He demanded Soviet intercession with North Korea, to which the Soviets replied that it

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was not their problem. Proof of Soviet involvement was lacking then and is still lacking today.⁵³

Twenty-four January was the day which shaped the administration's response. In a series of marathon meetings which had come to define the White House in crisis, the "kitchen cabinet"

1. dealt with the problem of the ship's position. Not all the SIGINT evidence was in yet, but there was enough to show that the North Koreans themselves knew the *Pueblo* was outside their territorial limits. This was confirmed through both intercepted voice and radar tracking which located the *Pueblo* approximately fifteen nautical miles offshore. The president decided to go on the air to reveal this information and to bring the evidence to the United Nations;

2. determined, without evidence, that the capture was somehow related to Vietnam. All in attendance agreed that the Soviets must have known about it in advance. (Later that day CIA registered the only dissent.);

3. tentatively decided to move additional military aircraft into Korea, as well as station the *Enterprise* task force off the coast; decided to activate selected military reserve units for the crisis.⁵⁴

That same day FBIS intercepted a Korean Central News Agency broadcast purporting to contain a "confession" by Bucher alleging, among other things, that the *Pueblo* had made a "criminal intrusion" into North Korean territorial waters. That very afternoon the Pentagon issued a rebuttal, stating that "the *Pueblo's* position as determined by the radar track of the North Koreans themselves . . ." put the ship outside North Korean waters. NSA was not consulted on this release of SIGINT. Carter was livid, but he was powerless to alter the administration's determination to publish SIGINT refutations of North Korean charges.⁵⁵

Simultaneously, the administration was working on a presentation to the UN, to be made by Ambassador Arthur Goldberg. As nothing appeared sufficient to head off this even more explicit release of SIGINT, Carter sent a team to New York to work with Goldberg and his staff on the statement. By cooperating closely, NSA had an opportunity to read Goldberg's statement before he went before the Security Council on the 26th.

Goldberg presented both North Korean voice and manual Morse radar tracking to prove that the *Pueblo* was in international waters and that the North Koreans had known it at the time.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)(d)

(In 1983, when the U.S. released SIGINT on the KAL 007 shootdown, the SIGINT relationship with the Japanese was exposed by a blundering White House press secretary. The Japanese government was not pleased.)

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Over the next several days, the White House continued to wrestle with all the ramifications of the *Pueblo* incident. One of the most difficult problems was that of protection of reconnaissance vehicles. The group concluded that it was impractical, given the number of such missions every year. The TRS *Banner* was sent to Korea as part of the *Enterprise* task force, and when it patrolled the North Korean coast, it was under heavy escort. But this was more a matter of showing resolve than of collecting intelligence, and the president recognized that it would be impossible to provide this sort of service to every ship and airplane engaged in peripheral reconnaissance. In an interview given to Hugh Sidey of *Time* magazine and Jack Horner of the *Washington Star* on 26 January Johnson made this point:

The Soviet Union and the United States have many such ships at sea and conduct literally thousands of flights to collect intelligence by aircraft. Neither currently provide [*sic*] protection. If they did so, they would require navies and air forces enormously greater than their present forces.⁵⁷

During the various interviews and press conferences, the Johnson administration made a fairly clean breast of the peripheral reconnaissance program. During a meeting with the National Alliance of Businessmen on the 27th, Clark Clifford explained that the United States had both SIGINT and photographic satellites in orbit, and the photo satellites "can see a tennis ball on a tennis court." Regarding SIGINT collectors such as the *Pueblo*, he said, "We have communication ships and very sophisticated electronic equipment to intercept their communications. The Soviets have a number of ships. And so do we . . . The public has a bad idea about spying. However, we must do it."⁵⁸

The North Koreans continued to make propaganda hay. Several members of the *Pueblo* crew were forced to make "confessions" similar to Bucher's which laid out the SIGINT effort against North Korea and specifically implicated NSA in the effort. SIGINT tasking documents were displayed on North Korean television, complete with the then-current SIGINT codewords, Trine and Savin. (This resulted in another codeword change, and the codewords adopted in 1968 have been used ever since.) In the end, there was little left to publicize that the North Koreans had not already displayed to a curious world.⁵⁹

The *Pueblo* incident also became stage to one of the biggest battles ever between NSA and the JCS. As a result of a number of developments in Southeast Asia, NSA and JCS staffers had crafted a compromise on the provision of SIGINT support to field commanders. Called MJCS 506-67, it set out new ground rules for deployment and operational control of tactical SIGINT units. When it was decided, in the middle of the *Pueblo* crisis, to deploy an AFSS Emergency Reaction Unit to South Korea, the JCS thought that operational control would automatically transfer to Fifth Air Force. Not so, said Carter. These resources simply augmented existing AFSS assets and were in a direct service, not a direct support, role. Therefore, operational control would continue with NSA. The JCS viewed

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this as a betrayal of the compromise reached in negotiating the new document, and they ultimately prevailed. Operational control passed to Fifth Air Force on 19 February.

Assessments

Before the administration became caught up in a response to the Tet offensive in Vietnam, Johnson appointed a committee headed by George Ball to investigate the *Pueblo* incident. Ball and his committee concluded on 7 February that

1. the *Pueblo* had indeed been in international waters;
2. the mission had been a necessary one;
3. there had been no way of predicting the outcome, which might have been a spur-of-the-moment decision by the North Koreans. "It was assumed on the principle of mutual tolerance that, so long as we paralleled the Soviet practice, our vessels would remain relatively free from danger. . . .";
4. such missions should be continued, albeit with improved protection. Off the North Korean coast it would be necessary to provide escort vessels within a reasonable distance - aircraft on strip alert somewhere was not sufficient. Moreover, the design, armament, and equipment of the AGER-class vessels should be improved, and adequate destruction devices should be available. The rules of engagement should not bind the skipper to radio silence nor prohibit the use of defensive weapons until defense was impossible.⁶⁰

In February Congress got involved. At least three different sets of inquiries were performed, including one by William Fulbright in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (Fulbright was acquiring an insatiable appetite for matters cryptologic, as would be revealed at the hearings on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August; see p. 522.)

But by far the most intrusive was a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, chaired by Otis Pike. On 10 March General Carter testified at length about the *Pueblo* in executive session. Two days later Pike released some of Carter's information at a press conference, and Carter was furious. He had cultivated good relations with Congress and had occasionally provided sensitive information to members of certain committees when he thought it necessary.⁶¹ Pike's release set a very bad precedent and may have influenced NSA's response to that same congressman's far more extensive investigation of the intelligence community in 1975 - the so-called Pike Committee investigation. (At that time someone on the committee leaked the final committee report

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to the press, even though the House had voted to suppress it because it contained classified information, specifically cryptologic.)

Assessments within NSA began almost immediately. Once the Agency had made its initial damage assessment (see above), Carter appointed a committee to do a more complete job. Through the spring and summer, the assessment became more refined, but a full accounting would have to await crew debriefing. To this end the United States put on all the diplomatic pressure it could to secure the crew's release. In the end, however, the government had to sign a phony "confession" and apology at Panmunjom in order to get the crew back. They walked across the bridge at the truce village to freedom on 23 December, just in time for Christmas.

The complete mishandling of the crew debriefing was emblematic of the entire *Pueblo* incident. Viewing it as an internal matter, the Navy kept NSA uninformed of arrangements for the debriefing and insisted that NSG represent the cryptologic community. NSA viewed the assessment of cryptologic damage as their business, and finally got the Joint Chiefs to intercede with the Navy so that NSA could take its proper role.

The debriefing process itself was typified by heavy friction between NSA's team and the Navy authorities on the scene. The Navy even refused to allow NSA's team chief, [redacted] to communicate with Carter except through him, and [redacted] had to resort to extraordinary methods to get his cables back to the Agency. [redacted] reported that "... we are encumbered by a totally uneducated admiral who has neither the rudimentary knowledge of SIGINT, or for that matter, general intelligence, and who is in the position to edit our reports to the intelligence community." In response, Carter sent a bubbly message to Admiral Moorer, the CNO, complimenting the effectiveness of the debriefing team and the support received in San Diego (the debriefing site). Passed on to the Navy in San Diego, this message opened doors for

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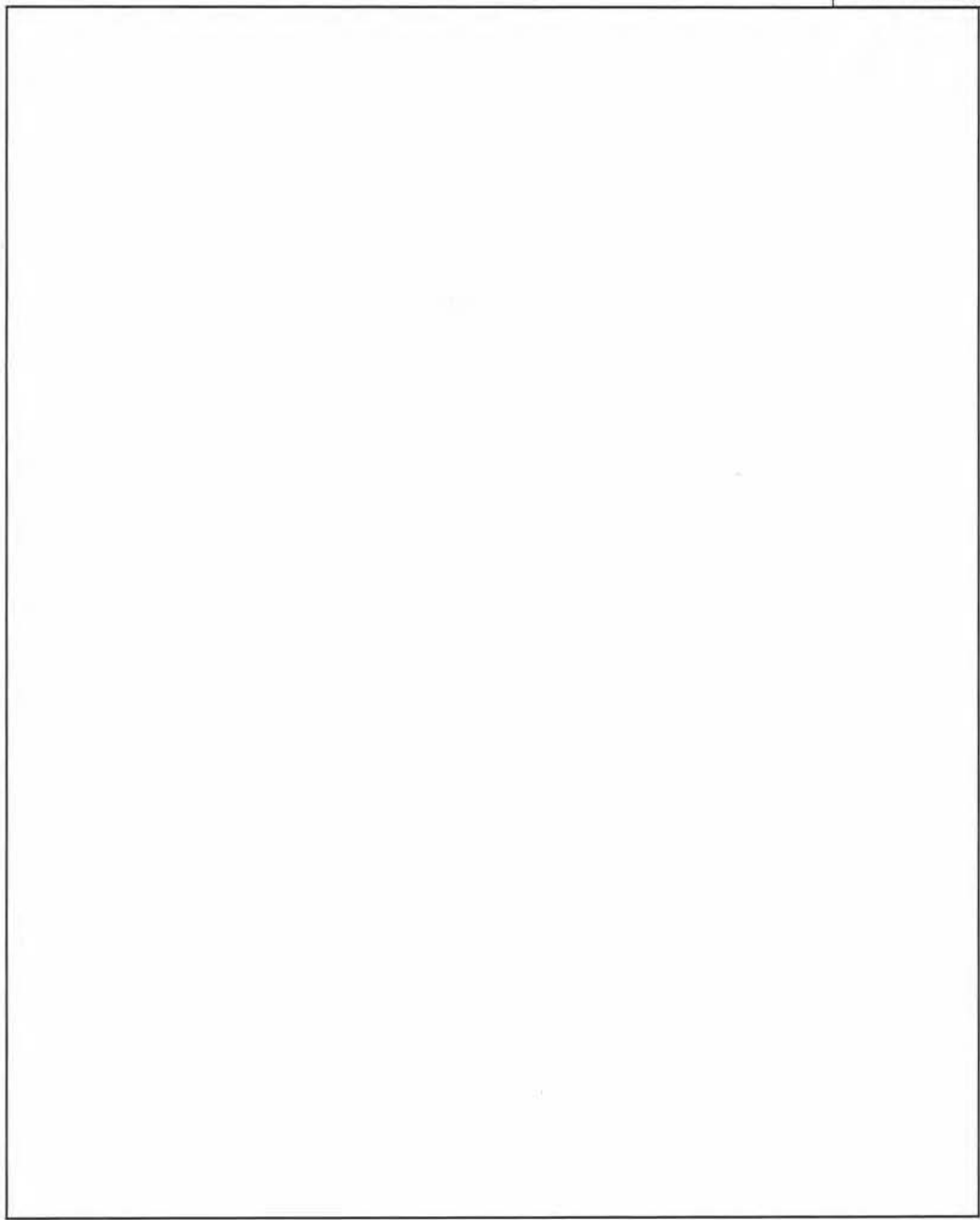
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Sometimes the heavy-handed approach was not the smart way to go.⁶²



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NSA had always designed crypto devices under the assumption that the enemy would eventually capture the machine. In order to read any communications, it would also be necessary to get the keying material. This, said NSA, was the salvation of the *Pueblo* story. Assuming that the North Koreans turned over the material to the Soviets, they could be in position to read traffic through several crypto periods in late 1967 and early 1968, but nothing more. This was bad enough, but NSA's design principles had staved off further disaster.⁸⁶

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Was the *Pueblo* capture planned? Were the Soviets behind it? No direct evidence has ever been found regarding either charge. NSA's Robert Newton, who made the most intensive and incisive study of the incident, believes that it was planned. However, it could easily have been an extension of the on-going North Korean campaign to rid their waters of South Korean fishing boats, and there is evidence to suggest this. There is no evidence regarding Soviet foreknowledge, although their subsequent use of the captured materials is almost certain.

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It was a bad situation made worse by negligence. The crew was poorly trained, and its linguists could not even render advisory support to protect the vessel from capture. The Navy loaded it down with far too much classified material and equipment, some of it even beyond the clearance level of those aboard. The crew never practiced emergency destruction, which was next to impossible anyway given the inadequate destruction systems then available on board. There was evidence of poor coordination between captain and cryptologic crew.

Following the capture, the Navy and NSA engaged in an unseemly jurisdictional battle over the debriefing process. On the Navy side, there was a lack of understanding of NSA's role.

Self-defense was only one of the problems besetting the TRS program. All the vessels had been recommissioned; most of them dated from World War II. They were becoming expensive to operate, and 1968 was to be the year in which NSA hoped to obtain money to refurbish and continue the program. Even while the *Pueblo* was being captured, NSA was working on an internal study of the future of the AGER portion of the TRS system. NSA felt that little was wrong with the AGERs that could not be fixed by a little redefinition of command relationships. But the Navy, strapped for cash to continue its presence in Southeast Asia, as well as elsewhere in the world, favored diverting the money to combat vessels.

Both CIA and NSA put forth intelligence requirements supporting program continuation, particularly for Cuba, Southeast Asia, and the Mediterranean. But the Navy noted the difficulty and expense of protection. After a limbo period, during which each budget decision went against TRS, Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard cancelled the program in October 1969. The last of the ships, the *Belmont*, was decommissioned just three months later.⁷¹ Surely the *Pueblo* and *Liberty* incidents were on his mind to the end.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

As the U.S. tried to figure out whether or not the Soviets would invade Czechoslovakia in 1968, these [SIGINT] reports quite simply muddied the water and [challenged] even the most experienced all-source analyst searching for meaning and patterns in a mountain of material. The conversations reported were relevant. There were just too many.

Angejo Codevilla, Informing Statecraft: Intelligence for a New Century

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 stands in history as one of the masterstrokes of the assertion of imperial control. It was masterful because of its speed, its surprise, and its brute force. It was hidden as part of a series of military exercises which,

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like a tornado out of control, turned suddenly and savagely to stamp out a generation of new political leaders. And it allegedly took the West entirely by surprise.

Viewed from a distance and as a whole, this analysis generally holds up. But viewed from up close, the generalizations begin to break down. They are simplistic and not entirely accurate. The reality is more complex.

The Prague Spring

It began in October 1967. The old Communist order under Antonin Novotny was beginning to crumble. At home he had overcentralized the economic system, and in foreign policy his support of the Arab cause during the 1967 war grated on younger and more liberal colleagues. And he had dealt not very skillfully with the subsurface conflict between the Czechs and Slovaks. For all these sins Novotny confronted considerable unrest.⁷²

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Internal dissent erupted on the night of 31 October when a routine protest of the lack of electricity for their dormitories by students from the Technical College overflowed in a melee between students and police. The pot continued to bubble during November and December.

[Redacted]

Novotny desperately clung to his position as first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party until 4 January when the party leadership banded together to vote him out. In his place they installed an obscure Slovak nationalist, Alexander Dubcek, first secretary of the Slovak Communist Party. Dubcek was known as a good Communist, and at first the Soviet leadership seemed to regard it as a routine and perhaps overdue unhorsing of a used-up Communist functionary. But Dubcek turned out to be anything but a routine Communist. Under his leadership, the Czechoslovak government quickly turned to market reforms and political liberalization which included press freedom and budding capitalism. Newspaper reporters began calling it the "Prague Spring"

[Redacted]

On 4 May according to press reports, Dubcek and his principal lieutenants made a hurried trip to Moscow. It was in fact a showdown with the Soviet Communist Party over the Prague Spring reforms and the general direction of Czech communism. The official communique spoke of a "comradely atmosphere," which one writer said "is Communist shorthand for cold disagreement."⁷⁵ This was followed by a series of secret meetings in the Kremlin, almost certainly on the Czech "crisis."

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Field reports (primarily from the ASA unit at Rothwesten) indicated that the Soviet troops were in a very high state of alert. But CIA, wading through the huge volume of reports, assessed the readiness as being related to a field exercise. This calmed the White House somewhat, and Walt Rostow told the president that Warsaw Pact forces did not appear ready to invade. In fact, it was very difficult to determine what the Soviets would do.

[REDACTED]

This menacing troop buildup continued through the month, until there were some nine line divisions and three army headquarters just to the north and east of Czechoslovakia. [REDACTED] continued to track troop movements. (But the press also tracked the troop movements.) The situation in Czechoslovakia was tense; many believed that the Warsaw Pact would invade immediately.⁷⁸

On 24 May a joint communique was released announcing that Warsaw Pact exercises would take place in Poland and Czechoslovakia in June.

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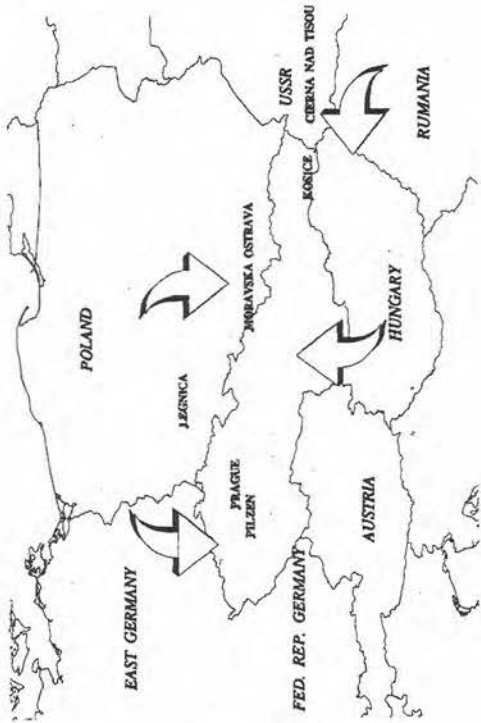
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The exercise, called Sumava, played out from 18 to 30 June. Its scenario involved a three-prong invasion of Czechoslovakia, with Czech forces representing NATO as the sole defenders. Invading forces were Soviet, Polish, East German, and Hungarian, and the exercise served as a dress rehearsal for the real invasion in August. At the termination, Warsaw Pact forces did not return to their bases - they ominously stayed in place until mid-July.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, Dubcek and the Czech leaders played a dangerous game with the Kremlin. Dubcek refused to retreat from liberalization measures and declined to attend a 14 July meeting at the Kremlin to discuss the situation. The meeting was held without him. With Soviet troops still on Czech soil, it took a great deal of courage not to back down.⁸¹

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Czechoslovakia, 1968

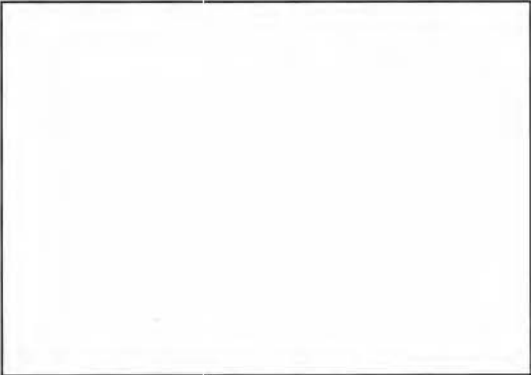
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On 23 July the Soviets announced yet another large-scale exercise, to be held along the Czech border and in western Russia, Byelorussia, and Latvia. The announced purpose was to work out rear services procedures. On 30 July they announced that the exercise would be extended into Poland and East Germany. It did not include Czech troops.⁸²

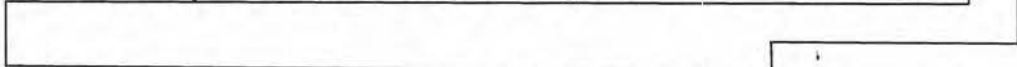


On 1 August Dubcek and his lieutenants attended an unprecedented face-to-face meeting with Soviet Communist Party secretary Leonid Brezhnev and the Politburo leaders in the Slovakian town of Cierna nad Tisou. The proceedings are thought to have been acrimonious, but Dubcek did emerge from it with a "Declaration of Bratislava," a general statement of socialist principles which papered over the disagreements and preserved a measure of public agreement.⁸³

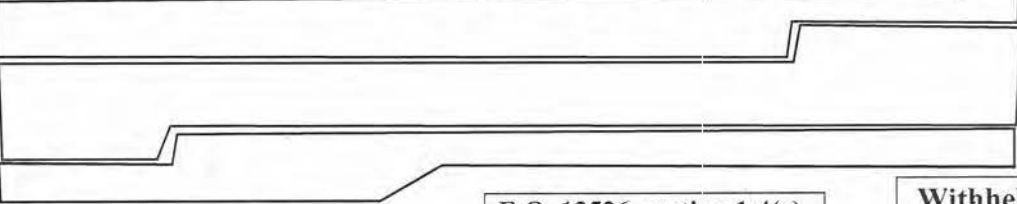


Dubcek and Brezhnev in Bratislava,
4 Aug 1968, only two weeks before the invasion

On 20 July the control authority moved to Legnica, in Poland, and stayed there through the invasion preparations. During the last week of July, GSFG and NGF (Northern Group of Forces) units moved to new positions closer to Czechoslovakia.



On 10 August Moscow announced the beginning of a communications exercise.



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[Redacted]

On 18 August, the same date that the command post exercise concluded,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

The welter of indicators was even more difficult to sort out in the United States. NSA was not making predictions or even doing a very good job of wrapping up the field site reporting. Since the White House had, in mid-decade, arranged for the input of SIGINT directly to the Situation Room, huge volumes of raw SIGINT flowed in, but it was basically unmodulated from Fort Meade. As luck would have it, though, NSA's David McManis, the deputy chief of the Situation Room, was looking at the indicators and had established an easy dialogue with Walt Rostow, the national security advisor. He and Rostow privately agreed that an invasion was likely, although they did not have enough information to predict the date.

On 19 August McManis noted to Rostow that the invasion that they both thought would happen appeared to be imminent. [Redacted] The next day would be time for Johnson's Tuesday Lunch with his key national security advisors. At the lunch, Rostow broached the subject of Czechoslovakia; it appeared to him that something was about to happen. In his planning notes for the president, Rostow noted: "You may wish to encourage the group to speculate about basic Soviet strategy in U.S.-Soviet relations at this stage, including the relationship to possible moves against Czechoslovakia. . . ."

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[Redacted]

According to Rostow, "We judged the Central Committee meeting as ominous, not hopeful," at the Tuesday Lunch. Richard Helms (DCI at the time) felt that the Soviets had decided to move.⁹¹

Later that day, Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the U.S., called to say he would like to see the president that evening. The timing was almost unprecedented - the president knew immediately that the subject must be Czechoslovakia, and it must mean invasion.⁹²

At about midnight, 20 August, Warsaw Pact forces, poised on the border, rumbled across. Some fifteen to sixteen Soviet divisions, augmented (for public relations purposes, no doubt) by three Polish divisions and smaller numbers of Hungarians and Bulgarians, attacked in three major spearheads. The largest contingent raced in from the north, along the East German border, toward the key cities of Prague and Pilsen, while smaller groups came in from the Soviet Union (Carpathian Military District) and north from Hungary. At the same time, airborne forces launched from bases in the Soviet Union (primarily Vitebsk and Panevezhis) to key nodes in Czechoslovakia.⁹³

[Redacted]

It was sudden, massive, and effective. They rolled over the almost defenseless Czech forces virtually unopposed.⁹⁵

Once in Prague, Soviet troops arrested Dubcek and his liberal supporters in the National Assembly. There was little resistance from the population, but the invaders, who

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had been told to expect a jubilant reception, were taken aback by the deep hostility of the Czech citizenry.⁹⁶

[redacted] No Soviet forces went on alert, and later postmortems called into question the validity of using alert status as an indicator of hostilities. It was of a pattern with the tactical situation, which was evidently designed to be disguised as exercise activity.⁹⁷

[redacted] The alert was probably precautionary - since the end of the Cold War the deputy commander of the Warsaw Pact invasion forces has written that the Soviets were confident NATO would not interfere, and they did not feel extreme measures were necessary.⁹⁸

[redacted] Following the invasion, a great national debate ensued about the Czech "surprise." Journalists were unanimous in condemning the failure of intelligence to warn. *U.S. News and World Report* reported that Johnson learned of the invasion from Dobrynin. Tad Szulc, in his history of Czechoslovakia since World War II, said that intelligence abounded, but "the recipients of all this intelligence input seemed unable or unwilling to interpret it adequately," and he noted that NATO did not go on alert all summer. Historian Walter Laqueur wrote that the West learned about the invasion from a radio broadcast in Prague. He claimed that "technical intelligence [read SIGINT] had the information, but did not get it to decision makers in time."¹⁰⁰

They were all right, and they were all wrong. As with all intelligence analysis, success or failure depended on how you defined the two terms.

Strategic warning was impeccable. [redacted]

[redacted] when 20 August came, and Pact forces were poised on the border, the United States knew it.

One modern-day analyst has proposed that had DIA possessed the warning indicator system in 1968 that it later developed, it would almost certainly have published a warning report by 19 August. The case for this is good - Warsaw Pact force posture, reported [redacted] was clearly at the highest level ever achieved; higher even than in May and July of the same year. The failure to publish a specific warning report was due to the fact that the system for doing it had not yet evolved.¹⁰¹

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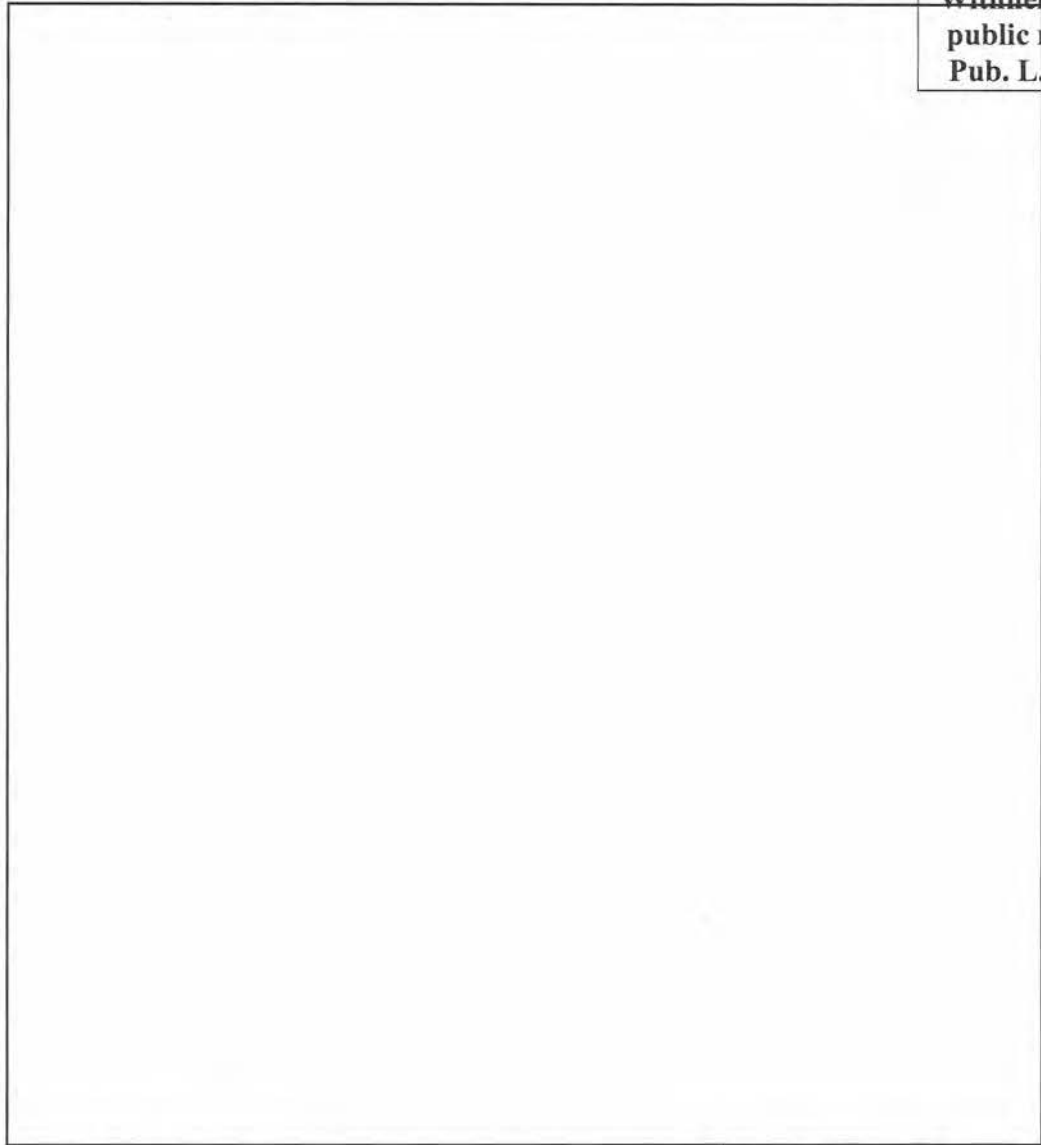
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The president knew as much as was knowable by the afternoon of 20 August and was not, contrary to press reports, surprised by what Dobrynin had to tell him. What good would it have done to alert NATO forces? NATO could do nothing anyway. Better to stay cool and look surprised.



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Romania - The Invasion That Never Happened

On the last two days of August, [redacted] reports began to arrive at the White House concerning a possible Soviet move into Romania to bring the errant Communist regime of Ceaucescu back into line.

[redacted]

As it happened, the White House had been concerned about this possibility as early as the 23rd. Romania had pursued an independent foreign policy since 1964, and during the Czech crisis had pointedly supported Dubcek (alone within the Soviet Bloc). Soviet troop movements in areas peripheral to Romania could be interpreted as threatening to that country, too. Rostow contacted NSA; the Agency replied that it did not look like an invasion to them, and the White House calmed.

[redacted]

Just to be on the safe side, however, President Johnson issued a public warning to the USSR on the first week of September. Romanian diplomats thanked the president for his support, and the crisis seemed to subside.¹⁰⁴

Rumors continued, but NSA stepped in again. In October the Agency again wrapped up recent activity, and it concluded that the Soviets were not about to move on Romania.¹⁰⁵

[redacted]

In contrast to its performance on the Czech crisis, the cryptologic community was widely praised for its role on Romania. The difference appeared to be the active participation of NSA, which headed off speculation at every turn. Romania was the invasion that did not happen, and NSA's calming influence was noted at the White House.

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THE SHOOTDOWN OF THE EC-121

The SIGINT crises of the decade came to a tragic end in 1969. The North Korean shootdown of a Navy EC-121, with the loss of all thirty-one men aboard, was one of those

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transcending events that precipitated drastic changes in the crisis structure at NSA Headquarters. The effects are still felt today.

North Korea and the Aerial Reconnaissance Program

By taking the *Pueblo* in January 1968, Kim Il-sung's North Korea had once more branded itself as an international outlaw. As the United States redoubled its efforts to protect its peripheral reconnaissance missions, North Korea continued its pattern of infiltration and subversion. In November 1968, a group of 120 well-armed commando infiltrators landed by sea on the east coast of South Korea and infiltrated villages in the area. It required 40,000 ROK militia and police nearly 2 months and the loss of 63 lives to clean out the group.¹⁰⁷

The situation on the ground was not necessarily mirrored in the air! Over the years there had been five incidents involving North Korean and American aircraft. Only two, involving RB-47 aircraft in 1955 and 1964, affected the peripheral reconnaissance program. In neither case was the aircraft shot down, so in reality North Korea had never shot down a reconnaissance mission, although they had tried twice. Considering the unsettled situation around the DMZ, and the hostility demonstrated by the Soviets and Chinese to this sort of electronic spying, this was not considered to be a very high number of incidents.¹⁰⁸

To see Soviet fighters in reaction to a peripheral reconnaissance mission was normal; often the Soviets would send fighters out in relays to pace the aircraft, staying between it and the Soviet coastline. By the mid-1960s, however, JRC had decided that the Asian Communist nations fell into a different category. When one of them launched a fighter in reaction, which was rare, they meant business. Because of this, two new conditions had been inserted into the White Wolf plan. Condition 3, which would be called any time a hostile fighter was seen headed over water within 100 nautical miles of the mission, required a heightened state of alert aboard the aircraft and diversion to a fallback orbit farther off the coast. If the fighter came within 50 nautical miles, this would be changed to Condition 5, which required an automatic abort. Since the institution of these new conditions, the U.S. had lost no missions to the PRC, North Korea, or North Vietnam.¹⁰⁹

Navy and Air Force SIGINT reconnaissance missions were almost daily occurrences off the North Korean coast. One of the most frequent visitors to the area were the EC-121 aircraft, nicknamed BEGGAR SHADOW, from the VQ-1 squadron in Atsugi, Japan. A large, slow, lumbering Lockheed aircraft designed to haul passengers, the EC-121 had become the easiest target in the Navy inventory. But it was bigger than its sister collector, the EA-3B, [redacted] For this reason it was still the aircraft of choice for fleet support.¹¹⁰

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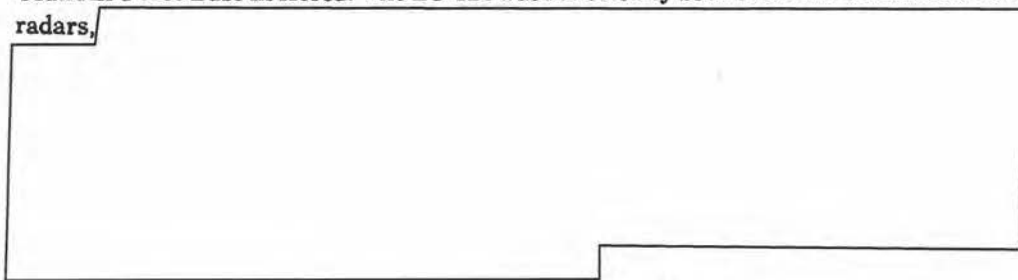
And fleet support was the mission. BEGGAR SHADOW aircraft were Seventh Fleet assets. They were tasked and technically supported by [redacted] (Kami Seya). NSA submitted secondary tasking, but the Navy jealously guarded operational control, and NSA's tasking often had little effect on the mission.¹¹¹

The week before the mission, General Charles Bonesteel, commander of U.S. Forces in Korea, warned of unusually vehement language and surly protests by the North Koreans at Panmunjom. The warning was sent to the VQ-1 squadron, which was advised to be extra cautious. But the North Koreans appeared to suffer through profound mood swings at the Armistice Commission meetings, and neither Seventh Fleet nor CINCPAC changed the risk category of 3 (hostile action unlikely). Conditions 3 and 5 appeared to cover any potential problems, anyway.¹¹²

Despite the relative venerability of the White Wolf warning program and its apparent good effect (there had been very few incidents since it had been instituted in the early 1960s), VQ-1 aircraft were only loosely cobbled to the system. According to a senior NSA official involved with White Wolf, the Navy was an "unenthusiastic" player in White Wolf. Unlike the Air Force reconnaissance aircraft, the EC-121 had no secure method of contact with the ground. For warning, they relied on SAC HF broadcasts labeled "Sky King," which could not be acknowledged. Thus the ground station personnel issuing a condition did not know if a transmission had been received, or what the situation was aboard the aircraft. Moreover, the key Navy units involved in the mission (including [redacted] at Kami Seya) were not on distribution for reports issued by AFSS sites watching the mission.

The Mission

The doomed aircraft departed Atsugi at 0700L with a double load of thirty-one crewmembers - the excess members were in training status. It was to fly across the Sea of Japan to a point off the northern coast of North Korea, do two and a half orbits, and land at Osan Air Force Base in Korea. The EC-121 was reflected by both Soviet and North Korean radars,



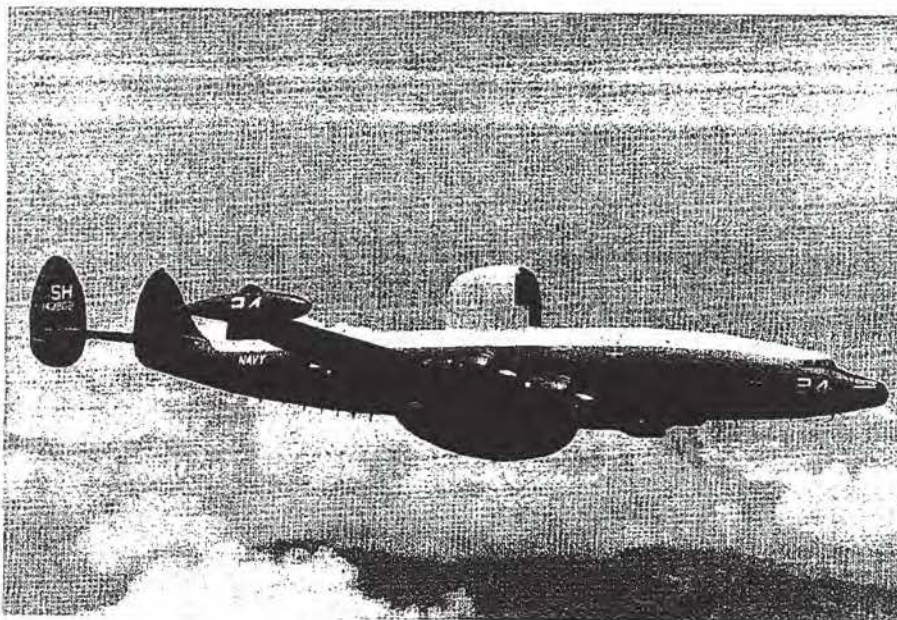
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EC-121

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The tracks of BEGGAR SHADOW, 15 April 1969

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At about 1330, as the mission was nearing the topmost portion of its last orbit, two North Korean MIG-21s scrambled from the training school at Hoemun. The fighters had been there for about two weeks - it was unprecedented for MIG-21s to be at Hoemun, and their purpose there was never explained. As was customary, Osan waited for a second plot before issuing a Condition 3. They did not get one for eight minutes, at which time the fighters were reflected at about fifty-five nautical miles from the mission and closing fast. One of them peeled off to make a defensive patrol, but the other bore on straight for the mission. At 1340 Osan issued a Condition 5, as the second MIG-21 was by this time reflected as well under fifty nautical miles from the mission. Only four minutes later [] the two aircraft merging. The shutdown probably came at 1347, while the mission was about eighty nautical miles from the coast. The tracks separated at 1349, and Soviet facilities ceased reflecting the mission two minutes later. The MIG-21 was headed home by that time.¹¹⁴

AFSS reporters at Osan were concerned. The North Korean reaction was virtually unprecedented, and Soviet radar tracking was ominous. They were in close touch with 314 Air Division in Korea, and at 1345, two minutes prior to the shutdown, Brigadier General Arthur Holderness, 314 AD commander, directed that F-102s be launched in case of trouble. But, incredibly (considering the *Pueblo* incident the previous year), the Navy had not requested strip alerts, so no fighters were actually airborne until shortly after the hour. The analysts [] spent the ensuing forty-five minutes replotting the mission and communicating with [] in Misawa and 5th Air Force in Japan trying to see if anyone else had any information. The feeling was that the aircraft must have "hit the deck" to evade the MIG-21.¹¹⁵

At the same time, Kami Seya was completely in the dark. They were making communications checks, but they were getting nothing in reply. [] had issued a Spot Report, but [] was not on distribution. The VQ-1 squadron was monitoring the SAC HF broadcasts, so they knew something was amiss, and they were making repeated calls to the air control facility at Fuchu asking for information.¹¹⁶

Finally, at 1444, almost an hour after the shutdown, [] issued a Critic. Still, no one knew for sure what had happened until FBIS monitored a 1600 North Korean broadcast claiming to have shot down a "spy plane." By then the aircraft was half an hour overdue at Osan.¹¹⁷

Fifth Air Force aircraft swarmed to the spot, but debris was not spotted until the next day by a naval P-3. Eventually two bodies were recovered, along with some debris. Although Soviet vessels participated in the search and rescue (SAR) operations, compromise of classified material was never a significant issue, as it had been with the *Pueblo*.¹¹⁸

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While [] was trying to figure out if they had a shutdown or not, the Current SIGINT Operations Center at NSA had called Major General John Morrison, the assistant director for production. Morrison began coordinating the NSA response, but found it almost impossible. A Group had a crisis response center (the CSOC) with analysts and reporters/ []

[] But B Group had nothing equivalent to it, and analysts had to be called to duty in the middle of the night. By 0330 Local, CSOC had fashioned a follow-up to the Critic, []

[] Morrison wore out his shoes walking between the A and B Group areas to try to get a coordinated response. The follow-up finally went out at 0500, but not before a thoroughly frustrated Morrison had vowed to consolidate his crisis and warning facilities into a single organization.¹¹⁹



John Morrison

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The Crisis

NSA's disorganized response was reflected at the White House. At the Situation Room, David McManis was trying to piece together the details, and he was on the phone with several different NSA divisions. He finally found it necessary to drive to NSA and get together the materials that he would need to brief the president.¹²⁰

The shutdown plunged the new Nixon administration into its first international crisis. During the campaign Nixon had criticized the Johnson administration's handling of the *Pueblo* capture, and he had vowed to demonstrate that the Republicans were made of sterner stuff. Henry Kissinger, the new national security advisor, prepared a list of options which included a B-52 strike (according to journalist Seymour Hersh), and bellicosity nearly carried the day. But in the end the solid opposition of the secretaries of state and defense (Rogers and Laird) and the DCI (Helms) won out.¹²¹

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Instead, the administration launched a diplomatic offensive. The cornerstone of this offensive was a presidential press conference on 18 April. There, Nixon, using data supplied by NSA, stated that intercepts of Soviet and North Korean radar reflections proved that the aircraft had been in international waters. This second presidential release of SIGINT information in fifteen months (the first went out during the *Pueblo* crisis) occasioned a very detailed damage assessment study at NSA. In the end, John Morrison's DDO team could find no evidence of drastic changes to either North Korean or Soviet communications.¹²² Whatever changes were needed by both countries had probably already been made after *Pueblo*. And exploitation of Soviet air defense communications had been a matter of public record since the release of tracking information on the 1958 RC-130 shootdown. By 1969 this exploitation was no longer a secret to anyone who could read the newspapers.

The administration decided ultimately on a military show of force in the Sea of Japan, a move almost identical to that which Johnson had made in January 1968. A massive flotilla was assembled under the name Task Force 71. It included three carrier task groups and 250 aircraft, [redacted] On 24 April AFSS flew a special RC-130 mission off the North Korean coast, heavily defended by American military might. By then, however, NSA had concluded that North Korea had crawled back into its leathery shell and was no longer an immediate threat. Moreover, there was no evidence that the Soviets or Chinese Communists were in any way involved in the incident.¹²³

A *Washington Post* story on 17 April called into question the value of the peripheral reconnaissance program. It was a good question, and it got a thorough airing in the Pike Subcommittee, which was still investigating the *Pueblo* capture. House Armed Services Committee chairman Mendel Rivers simply added the EC-121 shootdown to the list of things that Pike was tasked to look into.¹²⁴

While General Carroll of DIA came out four-square in favor of the reconnaissance program, John Morrison was not so categorical. Morrison, an Air Force general, could see the value of the Air Force program, which appeared to him to be better managed, used more capable aircraft, participated more fully in PARPRO (the Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program) - and were, hence, safer - and were more fully under national control. The Navy program, Morrison thought, suffered from a lack of all these attributes. NSA was getting only minimal value and had no control at all. Morrison stood his ground before Carroll and the Navy on the issue. He commissioned an internal NSA study of the situation, which basically backed up his gut feeling. It was the second serious run-in between NSA and the Navy on peripheral reconnaissance.

The *Post* reporter, who seemed to have impeccable sources, also cited the extended delay in reporting the incident from the field. General Wheeler (chairman of the JCS) also raised questions, and NSA was called to answer. An internal investigation completely exonerated [redacted] focusing on its performance of advisory warning functions (on which

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it did a credible job) rather than on the delay in issuing the Critic.¹²⁵ This approach seemed to quiet external criticism, but any good field reporter knew that the Critic should have been issued as soon as there was any considerable doubt as to the fate of the mission. The investigation begged the real question.

The Pike Committee expressed disquiet about the real value of such airborne reconnaissance in view of the cost in dollars and lives over the years. Some of the committee's concern may have stemmed from NSA's unwillingness to defend the Navy's programs. Pike recommended that the full Armed Services Committee take a more active role in monitoring the programs.¹²⁶ E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

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The committee was also very critical of interservice disconnects. The members cited failure of the VQ-1 squadron [redacted] to receive any information from the Air Force about the mission until they received the Critic, and they noted that this time delay contributed to delays in launching the search and rescue effort. They were incredulous over the failure of the Navy to ask the Air Force for fighter strip alerts, especially so soon after the *Pueblo* incident.¹²⁷

The rivalry between the Navy and NSA was not defused until General Carter stepped down as director. The new director, Admiral Noel Gayler, had the contacts within the Navy to build bridges, and as the new director he took NSA's case directly to Admiral John Hyland, CINCPACFLT commander. Gayler wanted closer NSA involvement with Navy SIGINT reconnaissance, and the authority to task missions. He eventually got part of what he wanted - NSA began tasking a few VQ-1 flights in the Pacific area.¹²⁸

The 1960s absolutely overflowed with SIGINT crises. After the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and the *Pueblo* capture of 1968, John Morrison proposed to General Carter that NSA establish a single national SIGINT watch center. The proposal was still hanging fire four months later when the EC-121 went down. Morrison pressed Carter for a decision, and on 17 July 1969 he got one. In the twilight of his term, Carter concurred with the establishment of a National SIGINT Operations Center (NSOC). Morrison himself was charged with putting it together.¹²⁹

As for the EC-121s, their time was almost over. A Navy Board of Inquiry, looking at the shutdown, noted the cumbersome nature of the aircraft (maximum speed 220 knots) and low headroom (maximum altitude 10-20,000 feet), and the board recommended that something better be procured. The replacement was the EP-3E Orion, which gradually took over all EC-121 orbits. The EC-121s were moved back to safer orbits until they could be mercifully retired.¹³⁰

Was the shutdown a deliberate act? Conspiracy theories usually require wild flights of imagination, but in this case it was the only explanation that made sense. Like the *Pueblo* capture, it seemed to follow no known North Korean procedure, and it did not appear to have simply been a routine operation gone haywire. Instead, it appeared to be a carefully preplanned event, from the placing of two MIG-21s at a training base that had

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never seen them before, to the flight pattern of the aircraft that allowed for little misinterpretation of intent. The shootdown happened to occur on Kim Il-sung's birthday, which led to speculation that it was a planned birthday present. Of course, the North Koreans had to hope that the JRC reconnaissance schedule conformed with Kim's birthday, which makes this part of the theory rather tenuous.

It was likely just another of North Korea's xenophobic strikes. This time a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft was in the way.

SECURITY AND THE WORK FORCE IN THE 1960s

Success on the cryptologic front did not translate into the security field. A succession of security problems in the early 1960s, begun in the summer of 1960 with the infamous Martin and Mitchell defection (see pg. 280), rocked the NSA community. For the first four years of the decade, it must have seemed like the sky was falling.

Dunlap

The House Un-American Activities Committee investigation into the Martin and Mitchell affair ended in 1962 when a final report was issued. Legislation to give the director additional powers to dismiss personnel, which resulted from the committee recommendations, was still dragging through Congress when in July 1963 an Army sergeant named Jack Dunlap committed suicide. A month later his wife showed up at NSA with a pile of classified documents which, NSA's security organization discovered, Dunlap had been selling to the KGB.

Sergeant First Class Jack E. Dunlap had first come to NSA as the driver for Major General Garrison B. Coverdale, the chief of staff, in 1958. Dunlap had up to that time served a rather uneventful career in the Army, which included service in Korea as an infantryman. While overseas he had worked as a technician and messenger for ASA, which got him close to the security business. But Dunlap was afflicted with serious character flaws. He liked money, lots of it, and when he had it, he spent it on yachts, fast cars, and faster women. Once at NSA, he discovered how to get it. Sometime in



Jack Dunlap

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May or June 1960, Dunlap walked into the Soviet embassy in downtown Washington and offered to sell classified documents. He claimed he could get his hands on them.¹³¹

Dunlap smuggled classified documents out of NSA literally under his shirt. He did not work in a technical area, had no knowledge of cryptology, and probably did not steal documents in any organized fashion. But he knew that the documents were worth money. He was in and about Coverdale's office and just scooped up whatever became available. The FBI and NSA security people were never able to determine with any certainty just what Dunlap had sold.¹³²

Twice the Army alerted Dunlap for overseas assignments. This represented a serious threat to his lifestyle, which by that time included two Cadillacs, a Jaguar, a thirty-foot yacht, a world-class hydroplane, and a blonde mistress. The first time, Dunlap evaded the assignment by pleading a bad back. The second time, he informed the Army that he intended to resign, and he applied for a civilian position at NSA.¹³³

He did not get very far. His initial polygraph turned up evidence of petty thievery, immoral living, and living beyond his means, and his second try did not go any better. NSA initiated an investigation and withdrew his access to classified material. The investigation began in May, and the FBI interrogated him on 17 July. Apparently convinced that he was about to be exposed, Dunlap committed suicide six days later by inhaling carbon monoxide. Later in the summer his wife turned up with the classified documents that were still in the Dunlap residence.¹³⁴

The Dunlap affair brought further unfavorable publicity to NSA, but it did represent a success of sorts. Had the polygraph not been in place, Dunlap might have been hired in some capacity and would have continued his espionage. The incident renewed discussions about requiring military assignees at NSA to take the polygraph, but the armed services staunchly opposed it, and successive directors (Blake and Carter) made little headway. The custom of excluding the military from the polygraph did not finally end until 1985.

Much criticism attended the revelation of Dunlap's lifestyle, which had gone unreported by coworkers. Further, the affair spotlighted the ease with which employees could spirit classified documents out of the Agency. The impact was the initiation of exhaustive exit inspections, which continued for thirty years (until 1993), and a continuing focus on employee lifestyle, a point that was hammered home to NSA employees again and again during security awareness sessions. Although Dunlap is deceased, his ghost has lived ever after in the halls of Fort Meade.

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Hamilton

The same day that Dunlap committed suicide, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* published an article about NSA attributed to one Victor Norris Hamilton, a former NSA analyst. The third security crisis of the young decade had burst on the Agency.

Hamilton, whose family name was originally "Hindali," was Lebanese by birth. He met and married an American working for Point Four (a foreign aid program) in Libya in 1953, and emigrated with her to the United States. Hamilton's fluency in Arabic attracted the attention of NSA, and he was recruited for employment in 1957.¹³⁵

He remained at NSA for only two years. In early 1959 Hamilton began evidencing psychological problems, and he was sent to the medical staff for an evaluation. He was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic, but refused hospitalization, and he was medically terminated in June. He visited Morocco briefly but returned dissatisfied. He applied for employment at CIA, but there was no billet available for him. NSA tried to get him committed for psychiatric evaluation, working through his wife, but this failed. In 1960 he wrote a letter to the House Armed Services Committee claiming that an agent had offered him money to do business with the Soviet Union. The matter was turned over to the FBI, which tried unsuccessfully to interview him. He worked briefly as a teacher in Iraq but was discharged, and he dropped out of sight from May 1961 until the *Izvestia* article appeared.

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Hamilton brought more opprobrium to a besieged NSA security organization. Yet in his case, as in Dunlap's, it could be argued that the system worked. His initial hiring was, in retrospect, inopportune, but the internal screening system weeded him out before he progressed into more responsible positions. The severe embarrassment of the publicity surrounding the *Izvestia* article had less impact on NSA's posture than was predicted at the time.

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In March of 1974 the State Department reported to NSA that Hamilton was being detained in a Soviet psychiatric hospital. A Jewish émigré made a positive identification of Hamilton based on a photograph, and NSA closed the case in June.¹³⁸

The Hamilton and Dunlap cases heightened the sense of urgency in Congress about NSA personnel policies. When in 1964 Congress enacted PL 88-290, giving the director more authority to hire and fire NSA people, the legislation owed much to the three security cases that immediately preceded it.

David Kahn and The Codebreakers

The wave of publicity surrounding the Martin and Mitchell case interested a *Newsday* reporter named David Kahn. Kahn already had an active lifelong interest in cryptology sparked by his youthful reading of Fletcher Pratt's book *Secret and Urgent*. Subsequent to the Martin and Mitchell exposé, he wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* on the influence of cryptology on current events, and this spawned a publishing contract with MacMillan. *The Codebreakers*, a monumental work on the history of cryptology, was published in 1967 to a good deal of fanfare. It was, and has remained, the definitive work on the subject in the open press.

The publication was not a welcome development at Fort Meade. When NSA learned of the forthcoming book, it obtained a copy of the manuscript from the publisher. Without a reasonable hope of cooperation from either Kahn or MacMillan, the Agency reviewed the manuscript and marked a few passages for modification or deletion. To NSA's surprise, Kahn, then in Paris, reviewed the changes and agreed with virtually all of them. The material NSA wanted removed related to UKUSA collaboration and was not central to Kahn's thesis.¹³⁹

Although Kahn was reasonably cooperative, many other journalists were not. Press leaks relating to American cryptologic efforts became more troublesome over the decade, as the interest of the American public in NSA increased. Beginning as early as 1961, for instance, the *New York Times* quoted the presidential press secretary about the launch of Soviet manned space vehicles which referenced "listening posts" in the Middle East intercepting traffic between the launch site and downrange tracking stations. The next year *Newsweek* published references to satellite intercept of Soviet microwave transmissions. In 1966 the *New York Times* published a series of articles on SIGINT collection at the U.S. embassy in Moscow and on satellite intercept of Politburo-level limousine car phones.¹⁴⁰ A year earlier a press photo of McGeorge Bundy with President Johnson contained a copy of the CIA Daily Bulletin with a clearly visible "Top Secret Dinar" (the then-current Category III COMINT codeword) stamp affixed. This produced

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numerous press references to a "codeword so secret the very existence is classified." All the reporters seemed to know that the codeword referred to SIGINT, even at that relatively early date. The anonymity that NSA had enjoyed in the 1950s was slowly disintegrating.¹⁴¹

Cryptology is Legalized

The legal existence of a COMINT effort, rendered precarious by the Federal Communications Act of 1934, was finally established in 1968. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 dealt specifically with the issue. While prohibiting all wiretapping and electronic surveillance by persons other than law enforcement authorities (and even then under restriction), it stated that

Nothing contained in this chapter or in section 605 of the Communications Act of 1934 . . . shall limit the constitutional power of the President to take such measures as he deems necessary to . . . obtain foreign intelligence information deemed essential to the security of the United States. . . .¹⁴²

It did so just in time; the Watergate period and the attendant Church and Pike Committee hearings called into question all that was illegal about espionage, and much that was legal, too. The 1968 legislation provided a much-needed defense for NSA and the cryptologic community.

AMERICAN CRYPTOLOGY AT THE END OF THE DECADE

It is important that you recognize the systematic character of the cryptologic enterprise; that its integrity must be maintained because the challenge with which it is confronted cannot be met if that system is debilitated, fragmented, or destroyed.

General Marshall S. Carter on the occasion of his retirement, 1 August 1969

By the end of the 1960s, cryptology had become big business. SIGINT product reports had become common paperwork in the White House and at every level down from that. NSA sent representatives to nineteen organizations, ranging from enormous military commands like CINCPAC to [redacted] A study of strategic warning done in 1967 called COMINT "the workhorse of warning intelligence; no other source can match its continuity, timeliness, and span of coverage."¹⁴³

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The cryptologic community was at its height in terms of personnel numbers. NSA employed about 18,000 people [] percent of them military), while the SCAs had [] The total, about [] men and women, was a strength that had never been reached before and has not been attained since.¹⁴⁴

Relationships with the Military

Paradoxically, the relationship between NSA and the military commands had never been at such a low ebb. Strains in tailoring SIGINT support had developed during the Vietnam War. A series of situation-specific compromises had papered over the differences, while leaving the underlying issues unresolved.

At mid-war, 1966 and 1967, NSA and the JCS had tried to hack out a comprehensive agreement concerning the use and control of SIGINT resources. The resulting document, called MJCS 506-67, left DIRNSA in overall control of all SIGINT assets but provided that under certain circumstances certain types of assets would be delegated to the tactical commander. The memo carefully defined the procedures for doing this, and for the first time the role of the cryptologic support group was defined and standardized.¹⁴⁵

The trick was in universal interpretation and smooth implementation. The first try, during the *Pueblo* situation, collapsed in howling controversy, and it colored relationships for several years to come. Although the agreement was employed more successfully in later years, difficulties persisted.

In 1967, the same year that MJCS 506-67 was published, the Army convened a board under Brigadier General Harris W. Hollis to "examine cryptologic and related activities." At the root of this study were deep-seated differences between NSA and the Army over the management of cryptologic assets. The Hollis Board recommended a series of steps which would have both pulled ASA resources away from DIRNSA control on the one hand, and on the other, given ASA a more favored seat at the cryptologic table.

Hollis made a pitch to transfer ASA direct support resources from the CCP to the Army general-purpose program. This proposed move would have fragmented cryptologic resources while divorcing the Army from the CCP system. NSA opposed it, while recognizing the tendency to fully fund big-site resources and programs at the expense of tactical assets. Hollis also recommended that ASA be given operational control of tactical SIGINT resources at all times - the Army deferred this.¹⁴⁶

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Distressed at the increasing concentration of resources at Fort Meade, the Hollis Board made a number of proposals that would have strengthened in-theater ASA processing. This move to improve SCA theater assets amounted to an attempt to halt the tide. The waves of cryptologic centralization continued to wash inexorably over the valiant Hollis Board, and nothing came of the attempt.¹⁴⁷ E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Finally, Hollis proposed that the Army become more involved in centralized cryptologic activities, by taking a role in futuristic projects like [] and by increasing its manning at Fort Meade. While pointing out that ASA had already been given a piece of [] (a logistics piece, but nonetheless a piece), NSA noted deepening trends in the opposite direction. Army policy led in the direction of diversification, especially at the officer level, rather than toward the cryptologic specialization that was required for greater ASA participation in the centralized cryptologic system.¹⁴⁸ It was an ominous trend which led ASA in a tactical direction and which eventually caused it to virtually abdicate its unique SIGINT expertise, established so laboriously by Friedman and others in the 1930s.

The debate over SIGINT control intensified in 1969 when JCS promulgated a new policy document for electronic warfare, called MOP-95. Electronic warfare (EW) had always been outside the purview of SIGINT, but MOP-95 broadened the definition of EW to include a new category called Electronic Warfare Support Measures. The new category sounded just like SIGINT, but without the codewords or centralized control. General Carter attacked the new JCS document, to no avail. The armed services continued to develop EW capabilities, in league with the SCAs, which were happy to participate in a new effort divorced from NSA control.¹⁴⁹

During the summer of 1969, as General Carter's term as director wound toward its end, the Joint Chiefs were considering a direct assault on NSCID 6. The objective was to expand JCS authority over cryptologic assets, at the expense of DIRNSA. Carter found out about the draft, and in a phone call to General Wheeler (chairman of the JCS) he called it an "absolute monstrosity." The revision of NSCID 6 was going through coordination when it was halted by Admiral Johnson, director of the Joint Staff, to await the appearance of Admiral Gayler at Fort Meade.¹⁵⁰

Marshall Carter Retires

Weary of conflict with the services and debilitated by medical problems, General Carter retired in August of 1969. But before he did so he loosed one final blast. In a letter to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird the day before his retirement ceremony, he characterized the state of cryptologic management as "diluted."

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Despite the vigor, ingenuity, enterprise, and growing competence of the national cryptologic establishment which emerged almost seventeen years ago, subsequent administrative and organizational arrangements . . . have diluted the original concept and clouded the original goals. More and more common tasks have been assigned outside the cryptologic community, with a corresponding loss of efficiency and economy.¹⁵¹

He excoriated the legal hairsplitting that had been employed to shave cryptologic resources from the central system, to call a duck something other than a duck in order to free it from NSA's control. He was pessimistic about the future.

Carter was asked to hold invitations to his retirement ceremony at the Pentagon to 150. He invited only 3 people and zipped through the ceremony in ten minutes. The Pentagon was as happy to see the last of Marshall Carter as Carter was to leave the wars.¹⁵²

Gayler Takes the Helm

With Carter on the way out, the Department of Defense decided to experiment with a new kind of director. Instead of appointing an intelligence specialist on his final military assignment, DoD nominated an admiral with an operational background and ambitions to go higher.



Lt Gen Carter shows incoming DIRNSA VADM Gayler his office.

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Noel Gayler was untainted by the intelligence business. The son of a Navy captain, he had gone into naval aviation soon after his graduation from Annapolis in 1935. Gayler had served as a flyer in the Pacific in World War II, following which he had had many years of both operational and staff experience with the line Navy. He had been only the third naval officer ever to fly a jet aircraft, and when he was nominated to fill Carter's job, he still held the record for the longest flight from an aircraft carrier. He was a known protégé of Elmo Zumwalt, the new and reformist CNO.¹⁵³

Gayler was the most unusual director in NSA's history from many aspects. Personally, he was dynamic, mercurial, and high-strung. Gordon Sommers, a senior civilian at USAFSS, described Gayler's management style as all Navy.

Gayler came from a Navy background, and his perception of command and control was the captain on the bridge of the ship with a speaker tube down to the boiler room yelling orders to throw more coal on the fire, and everybody down to the lowest level threw more coal on the fire.¹⁵⁴

His impatience with briefers was legendary, and he was known to throw things when especially agitated. He seemed to strike out in all different directions at once, and he moved with dizzying speed from one topic to another. Short, stocky and athletic, he resembled a fireplug in constant motion.

Gayler was put in the job to repair the damaged NSA-JCS relationship. He understood that he was to open up channels of communication, that he was to talk to the operational officials on the Joint Staff and get things moving again. One of his first moves was to create a permanent NSA representative to the Pentagon, accredited to the JCS, the military departments, and the office of the secretary of defense.¹⁵⁵

He was immediately confronted with the JCS staff papers, forwarded to him by Vice Admiral Johnson. The papers were more than just critical - they amounted to an indictment. In his reply to Johnson, he said that the basic directives (i.e., NSCID 6) seemed to be sound and that "any difficulties have been occasioned by the attitudes of personnel involved" (a clear reference to his predecessor and his antagonists). He believed that he could patch things up through personal diplomacy, and he began calling people at the Pentagon. Within weeks he had defused the situation.¹⁵⁶

Although he did put NSA back on speaking terms with the military, it is hard to see how he accomplished it. His personal relationship with most of the Joint Chiefs was cold to the point of hostility. But Gayler was politically astute, and he moved easily in Washington's power elite despite his mannerisms. When he departed, he was rewarded with the plum assignment of CINCPAC and got his fourth star, the first NSA director ever so elevated.

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The Eaton Committee

By 1967 the SIGINT budget passed \$1 billion, and manpower stood at nearly 100,000. Officials at the Bureau of the Budget were already taking a close look at the CCP when General Carter sent over his CCP proposal for FY69, which added another \$200 million to an already high figure. The CCP monitor, William Mitchell, went through the roof. He took the Carter budget to Charles Schultz, director of the Bureau of the Budget, and convinced Schultz that cryptology had to be "investigated." Schultz, who had worked in ASA earlier in his life and probably thought he had special insight, sent an unstaffed memo to the president proposing a national-level cryptologic review.¹⁵⁷

Richard Helms, the DCI, found out about this invasion of his turf, and he called White House staffer Bromley Smith. Walter Rostow and Clark Clifford put a stop to the Schultz memo, but this did not solve the cryptologic budget problem. Ultimately Robert McNamara, whose empire included NSA, convinced the president that Helms himself should be charged with the job. The DCI was to appoint a high-level committee to investigate cryptology. The objective was to reduce the CCP, and it was to be a review to end all reviews.¹⁵⁸

Helms appointed a very high-powered group. Lawyer Frederick Eaton was chair, and the members were General Lauris Norstad (former SACEUR), Ambassador Livingston Merchant, and Dr. Eugene Fubini, the DDR&E and long-time nemesis of Marshall Carter. A more influential foursome could hardly have been found for the job.¹⁵⁹

The Eaton Committee suffered from the hostility of almost every organization with any stake in the problem. Helms himself had been cool to the idea when it was first proposed. Regarding NSA and SIGINT satellites, for instance, he stated that NSA's relationship with the NRO was a matter for him and McNamara to sort out, and it should not be discussed by a committee. He opposed any investigation of Third Party matters as intruding onto CIA turf. He demanded that the committee not interfere with CIA's independent SIGINT effort: "Relations between NSA and CIA on covert SIGINT collection activities have been the subject of exhaustive discussion and review and present working arrangements appear to me to be satisfactory."¹⁶⁰

Helms suggested that the committee occupy itself with considerations of ELINT management and reduction or consolidation of SIGINT field sites in vulnerable overseas areas. But DIA and the services opposed any look at ELINT, and NSA viewed the idea of reducing field sites with suspicion.¹⁶¹

The appointment of Fubini to the committee was, to Carter, the last straw. He determined to have nothing to do with the effort, and his appointees to the committee staff (Walter Deeley and Gerald Burke) defended NSA interests at every turn. The investigative effort was so fragmented by staff bickering and external hostility that Eaton was able to accomplish little. It was hardly a review to end all reviews.¹⁶²

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The conclusions of the Eaton Committee, especially in the area of COMINT, tended to support NSA objectives. Eaton was a centralizer, and he proposed that NSA obtain more control over the cryptologic process. In his view, parts of the SCA staffs should be integrated with the director's staff. The committee recognized the central dilemma of resource control which was bedeviling SIGINT, and it viewed askance service attempts to flake off various parts of the process through inventive definitions of EW and increased control of cryptologic field sites. Service complaints about lack of SIGINT support should not be used as a lever to fragment the cryptologic effort: "The tendency on the part of the military, unilaterally, to remove essential resources, both men and equipment, from the approved Consolidated Cryptologic Program is detrimental to the entire effort and should be resisted."¹⁸³

Regarding ELINT, however, the panel proceeded in the opposite direction. Stating that "over the past ten years, it has become apparent that the decision to place ELINT as a whole within the COMINT structure has not proved workable," the committee recommended that ELINT remain decentralized. NSA's proper role was to exert technical control, to collect and process signals of national strategic importance (like Anti-Ballistic Missile [ABM] radars), and to maintain a central database for the intelligence committee.

On overseas basing, the committee simply repeated shopworn platitudes about the need to reduce bases without hurting the effort. Eaton and company seemed to understand that overseas real estate must sometimes be retained in a less-than-productive status to preserve options against future targets. The Eaton members also felt that the SIGINT targets would increasingly become high-tech problems which required huge amounts of money, [redacted] and the overhead SIGINT satellite program. The committee cautioned against rushing in too fast, but recognized that increasing amounts of money would have to be funneled into those efforts at the expense of conventional collection.¹⁸⁴

On the critical issue of assessing the effort against [redacted] the committee admitted that it had not been able to gather enough information to make a recommendation. There were telltale signs that NSA had decided not to unburden itself of its most closely guarded secrets to a group which it did not trust and that Eaton recognized a stone wall when he saw one.¹⁸⁵

The only Eaton recommendation that had any long-range impact on intelligence was one which strayed beyond the borders of cryptology. The committee recommended that the DCI exert stronger direction over the overall intelligence program by creating a National Intelligence Resources Board (NIRB). This emphasis on centralized direction harmonized with the philosophical bent of the committee, and at CIA it fell on fertile ground.¹⁸⁶

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The Eachus Committee

Following the failure of the Eaton Committee to resolve the central problem of the worth of the effort against Soviet cipher systems, the NIRB prepared to take on the problem. But in the fall of 1968, before the NIRB could get moving, NSA itself established a panel for the [redacted] effort. The Eachus Committee was headed by Dr. Joseph Eachus of MIT, a former Navy cryptanalyst during World War II and one of the leading civilian authorities on the Soviet cipher system problem. Eachus was known to NSA and was a trusted friend. Carter placed his bets on a friendly assessment.



Joseph J. Eachus

In contrast to the Eaton fiasco, NSA revealed all to Eachus. The Eachus report was the most thorough assessment of the NSA position on Soviet enciphered systems ever done.

Eachus enumerated the systems that were defying attack - the prospects for many of them were dim. But he assessed prospects on other systems as good, as a result of a confluence of factors. [redacted]

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Although Deputy Director Louis Tordella tried to justify the expense

[Redacted]

Eachus's role was to

validate the effort and urge that it be pursued with increased intensity.

The Creation of NSOC

Although the EC-121 shutdown pushed the NSOC cart over the crest of the hill, more than three years were to elapse before an organization actually took shape. NSOC's creation was delayed so long because of internal bureaucratic wrangling and logistics problems.

The first problem was space. Initial planning assumed that NSOC would physically move into spaces contiguous to CSOC, but it became clear fairly early that such a large organization would require its own spaces. Room could be made when the communications center (Tcom) moved to a new location on the third floor of Ops 1, but NSOC would have to wait for Tcom to move out. The second-floor spaces were to be available in 1971, but the calendar for the Tcom move kept slipping, and ultimately the area was not freed up until a year later. Meantime, the formation of NSOC was on hold.¹⁶⁹

The second problem revolved around what NSOC was to look like. In his initial NSOC concept paper, Major General John Morrison (the ADDO) described NSOC as a center that "would provide NSA with a single facility from which to conduct the production and dissemination of current SIGINT information. . . ." It would track ongoing events, but it would also produce reports and direct activities. It would comprise A Group's CSOC, B and G Group's crisis centers, elements of K1 associated with tasking mobile SIGINT elements, P04 elements involved in reconnaissance missions, and the Command Center. Shift operations would be headed by the SNOO (Senior NSA Operations Officer). Manning would come from CSOC's [] workers, [] people from P04, [] from the Command Center, and unspecified numbers from B, G, and W Groups. Its communications would be primarily via Opscomms ([] of them, a huge number at the time). Morrison named Air Force colonel [] to head the planning effort. [] fresh from Europe, knew exactly how the operation at Zweibrucken functioned, and could get his hands on the people who had made it successful.¹⁷⁰

The operating concept that Morrison envisioned was basically CSOC with other Agency elements grafted on. At the time CSOC controlled European field site reporting. It could direct reporting and could issue its own reports (although as time went on that function became almost the exclusive domain of the day shop). The day effort put out periodic summaries and wrap-ups, while events more than seventy-two hours old were turned over to A7, the term analysis shop. CSOC still lived in the days of the Teletype Model 28 Opscomm terminal, and analysts got their traffic delivered in paper copy from the Opscomms that resided in a separate room. Even so, things moved very fast in CSOC -

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it was closer to near-real-time than any other organization in the Agency. Morrison clearly modeled NSOC after CSOC.¹⁷¹

And that was where the trouble began. CSOC might have been ahead of the competition, but it just wasn't the model that non-A Group organizations wanted to use. Morrison's concept paper raised a storm of controversy. Frank Raven, chief of G Group, agreed to place a desk in NSOC, but insisted that G Group operations were much too diverse to be amenable to centralization, and the G Group desk would be a watch desk only, with no production functions attached. [redacted] of B Group took basically the same tack, and he agreed to relocate certain B functions only to lessen the physical distance between B Group and other Agency elements. W Group agreed to establish a desk in the new organization, but its focus was still in DEFSMAC, and the NSOC effort was perfunctory. [redacted], responding for K1, adamantly opposed absorption of any portion of the K1 mission (managing mobile collectors) by NSOC.¹⁷²

Morrison forged ahead anyway. In 1972 he appointed a planning group dominated by people with A Group experience, and he named a full-time NSOC staff headed by Richard "Dick" Lord, the former head of CSOC. Although key members of B and G Groups assisted Lord, the organization kept the A Group flavor. NSOC was being called "A Group and the Dwarfs."¹⁷³

The new NSOC edict was finally fashioned in the summer of 1972. By charter, NSOC was to "act as an authoritative and responsive interface on current SIGINT product and service both between SIGINT users and producers and between various producer organizations." It would also function as the NSA command center, and the senior officer, now called the SOO (Senior Operations Officer) would have true command responsibilities for the entire SIGINT system. In that capacity he or she represented the director.¹⁷⁴

Operationally, it resembled CSOC and its predecessor, the Air Force center at Zweibrucken. It monitored ongoing events and could take a variety of actions, including redirecting coverage and steering field reporting. Its original charter included the authority to do its own independent reporting, but this function was never exercised. NSOC did not become another Zweibrucken, except in the area of reconnaissance reaction reporting. But it did become the focal point for the release of all Agency electrical product reports. Finally, it did the daily director's brief and supervised the worldwide CSG system.¹⁷⁵

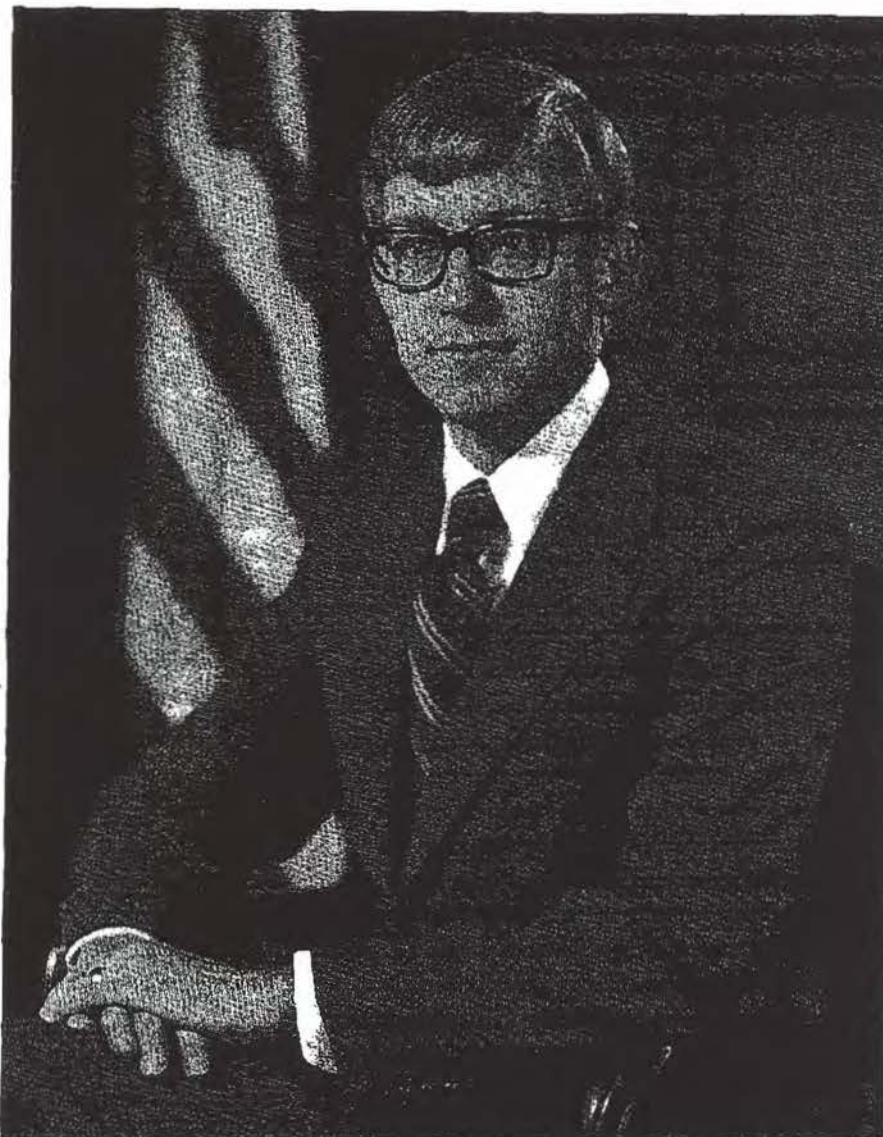
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Richard "Dick" Lord

Named by Morrison to put NSOC together, he later became NSA's deputy director.

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The NSOC that went operational in December 1972 (though the official ribbon-cutting did not occur till the following February) was in a state of technological transition. During the CSOC days, Walter Deeley, who had been Colonel [redacted] deputy in A8 (CSOC), had been working toward what he called the "paperless environment." He planned to electrically connect the field Opscomms with a computer so that KLIENLIGHTS could be processed and distributed automatically to CSOC floor analysts. A revolutionary concept at the time, Deeley pushed it with a dedicated singlemindedness. A Group selected the Univac 494 as the mainframe because of its communications handling capabilities. Software to manage the KLIENLIGHT system was called TIDE. The concept was in only a partial state of existence when NSOC was created, but it soon became the dominant concept within NSA. It made near-real-time truly feasible.¹⁷⁶

SIGINT in the Nixon White House

The decade closed with a new president, Richard Nixon. It also opened with a new chief of the White House Situation Room. When [redacted] of CIA departed the Situation Room at the end of the Johnson administration, General Alexander Haig was appointed to the job. But Haig was clearly destined for greater things, and soon NSA's David McManis was given the job.¹⁷⁷

The national security apparatus under the new administration was enmeshed in a rather strange structure. Henry Kissinger, a Harvard history professor, became the national security advisor, but he came to exercise power far beyond that. Kissinger was in effect Nixon's secretary of state (shoving aside the supine William Rogers), a DCI (moving into the turf of Richard Helms, whom Nixon distrusted) and still later, a de facto chief of staff for a president besieged by scandal and crime.

Like Walt Rostow in the Johnson administration, Kissinger became the funnel for intelligence to the president. When someone had to be called in, McManis phoned Kissinger, who lived only a short distance from the White House in Rock Creek Park. He was, according to all contemporary accounts, a brilliant man, but not as experienced in SIGINT matters as Rostow had been. Moreover, he was inclined to shield the president from the details of intelligence, where Rostow shared all. Thus when SIGINT did get to the Oval Office, it was generally subsumed into a mishmash of sources and not separated out and highlighted as it had been under Johnson. Nixon did not himself get involved in the details of intelligence, leaving those details to Kissinger.¹⁷⁸

~~HANDLE VIA TALENT KEYHOLE COMINT CONTROL SYSTEMS JOINTLY
NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS~~

~~TOP SECRET UMBRA~~



Henry Kissinger, May 1969,
in his office in the basement of the West Wing

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