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(U)Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U)Juanita Moody

(U//~~FOUO~~) Recalling the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, former NSA senior Juanita Moody said that it “allowed us to take advantage of everything we had learned during World War II and post-World War II... and I felt that every day in my career in the Agency from the Cuban crisis on was affected by my experience at that time.”

(U) She had come a long way from North Carolina.

(U) In early 1943, as the United States built its forces for combat, Juanita Morris, a student at a small college in western North Carolina, realized how many men at her school had dropped out and gone to war, either by enlistment or the draft. She felt ill at ease attending classes at a beautiful campus while others were sacrificing for their country. Determined to contribute to the war effort also, she traveled to the nearest recruiting office in Charlotte and volunteered.

(U) The Army organization then known as the Signal Security Agency had a vigorous recruiting program along the eastern seaboard. Most of those recruited were women -- college students, teachers, and young professionals -- who were not serving in the military.

(U) By April, Juanita Morris was at the Army cryptologic headquarters at Arlington Hall Station.

(U) While awaiting her security clearance, the SSA put her into unclassified training in cryptanalysis. She became fascinated with the subject and was highly disappointed when her clearance was granted and she was taken out of it. Her early tasks involved sorting messages and punch cards, but she soon demonstrated a talent for cryptanalysis and was given more challenging assignments.

(S//SI) As an avocation, once the day's shift was concluded, Juanita began looking at a German system that had been left untouched due to its difficulty, and soon became one of the centers of a small after-hours group determined to open its secrets. The group

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(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 795
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(U) At the end of the war, along with most who had come to Arlington Hall to aid the war effort, Juanita intended to return to college and get on with plans she had once made for her life. However, her supervisor pointed out how good she was at cryptanalysis and asked her to stay. She agreed. It should be mentioned that in 1948 she married Warren Moody, a noncryptologic employee. She later recalled that "Uncle Willy" Friedman never called her by her married name; at parties he would tell her husband, "I knew her when she was a Morris and I'm not going to change that." However, unlike Uncle Willy, we will call her "Moody" from now on.

~~(S//SI)~~ One of her conditions for staying was getting an assignment in the research and development organization. This gave Juanita Moody experience in the emerging field of computers and analytic machines; throughout her career she would be sensitive to the need for automating not only cryptanalysis but also communications. When she returned from R&D, she was assigned to lead the [redacted] problem.

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 (b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

~~(S//SI)~~ Through the 1950s, Moody moved upward as a supervisor on the Soviet and [redacted] problems. In 1961, however, as NSA undertook a thorough reorganization, she became chief of a major production element, not the Soviet problem as she had hoped, but [redacted]

[redacted] When she took the position, NSA's deputy director, Dr. Louis Tordella, told her she was going to have the Agency's most interesting job for the next five years. Neither of them knew that soon it would also be the busiest, and, for some weeks in 1962, the most critical.

~~(S//SI)~~ [redacted] and Moody was constantly under pressure to respond to crises [redacted]. She also led her workforce in reducing the lag time between intercept and delivery of product, and automating product release.

~~(S//SI)~~ In late 1961, Dr. Tordella accompanied two high-ranking DoD officials to Moody's office. They asked for a rundown on what signals intelligence could tell them about Cuba. Moody gave them a thorough briefing on Soviet shipping to the island and Soviet support of a military buildup. When she finished the informal briefing, the DoD visitors asked her to issue the information in a wrap-up report. Dr. Tordella demurred, saying that "finished intelligence" was the CIA's responsibility. The officials insisted, so Moody and her staff turned out a long summary about Cuba. (She believes the report went through the secretary of defense to President Kennedy; however, we cannot verify that.) Though it was initially treated as an "informal report," it was the predecessor to a long line of serialized product on Cuba.

~~(S//SI)~~ Ms. Moody presided over a significant buildup in analytic capability concerning Cuba. She also kept pushing for faster processing and release of product.

~~(S//SI)~~ In October 1962 the CIA's HUMINT and IMINT resources revealed that the USSR was preparing to place offensive nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba; the Kennedy administration confronted the Soviets and brought the world to the brink of war. As NSA information became vital for crisis management, Moody made key decisions about collection, processing, and release of information. A good deal of her time was spent in briefing: first, she had to brief NSA's director, Lieutenant General Gordon Blake, for his presidential-level meetings. Then, because communications systems were limited, she had to brief numerous high-ranking military and civilian decision makers by telephone; many did not have secure lines, forcing her to develop different circumlocutions for each individual. During the crisis, she did not leave the Agency for days at a time: some nights she slept in a room set aside by the director of production; some nights she slept just a few hours on a cot in her own office.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ In the years following the Cuban Missile Crisis, Moody was assigned to higher positions within the production organization at NSA. However, in the mid-1970s, her career foundered.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ In the 1970s, a special committee of the Senate, chaired by Frank Church (D, ID), investigated alleged abuses of civil rights by U.S. intelligence agencies. Moody at the time was responsible for product reporting and NSOC, so the Director, then Lieutenant General Lew Allen, USAF, sent her to testify before the Church Committee.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ As it happened, because of her Congressional testimony, Moody's name appeared in newspaper articles and editorials, incorrectly identified with some possible abuses of government power. In those days, as was supposed to be the case with Victorian women, many felt Agency employees should get their names in the press only three times, at birth, marriage, and death. Moody had become controversial at NSA, and, although no one said so outright, she believed it would be better for her as well as the Agency if she retired. Besides, she felt after such an intense career, she owed time to her family.

(U) Juanita Moody retired from NSA in February 1976, after 33 years of service. The previous December she had become the first recipient of the National Intelligence Medal of Achievement, presented by then Director of Central Intelligence George Bush.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ David A. Hatch, Center for Cryptologic History, 972-2893s, dahatch]

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