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Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

The Creation of NSA - Part 2 of 3: AFSA

(U) **SYNOPSIS:** After World War II, the Army and Navy cryptologic organizations sought to eliminate duplication of effort and surmount budget difficulties by forming a cooperative organization, the Joint Operating Plan. However, the JOP administrator did not have sufficient authority to achieve these goals.

(U) **NOW, ON WITH THE STORY:** In August 1948, believing that more economy had to be achieved in COMINT activities, the secretary of defense authorized a study on unifying the service cryptologic activities to cut costs. He convened a joint service board, headed by Rear Admiral Earl Stone, who lent his name to it.

(U) The Stone Board proved a rather contentious gathering, and even after two extensions of its deadline, it could do no more than agree to disagree. While the Army favored a new interservice COMINT agency, the Navy and the Air Force opposed it. The only possibility for the Stone Board was a split report.

(U) After Louis Johnson succeeded James Forrestal as SECDEF in 1949, the new secretary accepted the Army recommendation for a central COMINT agency and directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to create the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA).

(U) After extensive discussions, the services agreed on Admiral Earl J. Stone. Admiral Stone formally assumed his duties as DIRAFSA on 15 July. Early on, he decided that, insofar as practicable, COMINT activities would be concentrated at the Army's Arlington Hall Station, COMSEC at the Navy Communications Station, and research and development activities divided between them.

(U) The nonmilitary departments with an interest in COMINT, primarily the State Department and CIA, were displeased with what looked to them like an attempt by the military to set up a closed shop, but had little recourse, since the services controlled all COMINT production assets.

(U) AFSA maintained the high standards in cryptology that had characterized the wartime effort. It produced good intelligence on a wide range of targets. As with the JOP, whatever else it did, the enforced interservice cooperation under AFSA gave the services valuable experience in joint operations, which then had little precedent, and helped develop

standardized procedures and nomenclature.

(U) Nevertheless, AFSA did not live up to the expectations senior official had for it.

(U) It was assumed that AFSA would consolidate activities wherever savings in personnel or increased productivity would result, and, finally, allocate tasks and resources efficiently. Once again, this proved somewhat illusory. DIRAFSA had little authority that the CJO had not possessed.

(U) In allocating resources, AFSA's authority seemed easily flaunted. AFSA originally had jurisdiction over "fixed" intercept stations; "mobile" stations would remain under service control. However, each service had a different definition of these terms. The Air Force, for example, designated almost all its intercept units "Radio Squadrons, Mobile," no matter how firmly planted they might be, and thus kept them outside AFSA's operational control.

(U) AFSA continued to have problems achieving the economies for which it had been established. In addition to the basic problem of authority, AFSA had budgetary difficulties. It drew its funding from what had already been appropriated for the service cryptologic agencies, and thus became, in essence, a fourth SCA consuming scarce financial resources.

(U) Practically, AFSA also was dependent on the services for its communications. Physically, AFSA was split between two military stations.

(U) As we shall see, other dissatisfaction arose, with a fatal effect on AFSA.

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