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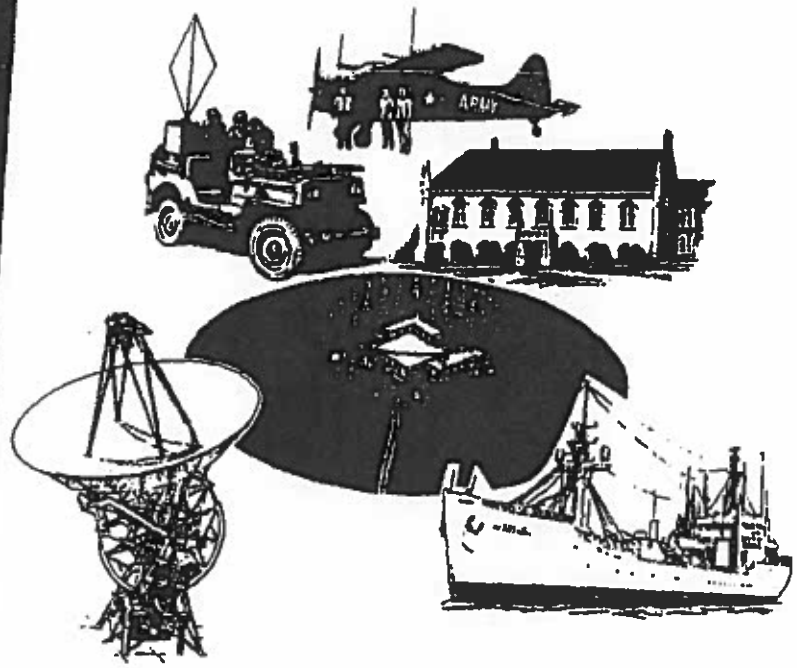

American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945–1989

Book II: Centralization Wins, 1960–1972

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UNITED STATES CRYPTOLOGIC HISTORY

Series VI
The NSA Period
1952 – Present
Volume 5

American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945–1989
Book II: Centralization Wins, 1960–1972

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CENTER FOR CRYPTOLOGIC HISTORY
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DEFSMAC

Occasionally the demands of centralization resulted in measurable steps forward, relatively unaffected by bureaucratic rivalries. The 1964 creation of the Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center (DEFSMAC) was such a moment.

[redacted]

A41 had two round-the-clock operations centers. The A41 Operations Center (Opconcen), located next to the A41 offices on the third floor of the operations building, was the nerve center. It had Opscomms to the primary warning sites and had established a tip-off system so that warning information [redacted] could be flashed back to A41. That organization, in turn, alerted [redacted] that were standing by. By 1962 the Opconcen had six Opscomms to collection sites. It was further linked by Opscomms to customers, [redacted] and the Washington-area organizations.

Downstairs in the computer complex was the Sigtrack center. [redacted] The Sigtrack center was in close touch with the Opconcen, but, although there were plans to consolidate the effort, they were still physically separate.[23]

When the consolidated facility, the Space and Missile Analysis Center (SMAC), was created in January 1963, it had Opscomms to sixteen facilities, plus the customers. Several different organizations had mounted twenty-four-hour operations, but SMAC and NORAD were far and away the major players – others simply fed off the information generated through the air defense and SIGINT warning systems.[24]

The disorganization in the missile warning business led, in 1963, to a full DoD-level review. The team surveyed the entire problem, talked with every organization involved, and made field trips to warning facilities like SMAC and NORAD (in Cheyenne Mountain, outside Colorado Springs). They found that NSA had the only coherent, centralized program, and, at the suggestion of A4, they took SMAC as the organizational model for a new, combined facilty.

It would be called DEFSMAC, would be located at NSA, and would be jointly staffed by NSA and DIA people. The chief and deputy chief would be selected jointly by DIRNSA and the director of DIA. Because most inputs were SIGINT-based, NSA

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possessed virtually the sum total of technical expertise. DIA was charged with integration, reviews, and nontechnical analysis of findings. DEFSMAC would have the same inputs, through the same Opscomm net, that SMAC had had. But because its official charter was established at the Department of Defense level, it carried with it far more authority than had SMAC. DEFSMAC had tasking and technical control of all DoD intelligence collection activities directed against foreign missile and space activities. It provided technical support, including tip-offs, to all DoD missile and space intelligence collection activities. The only exception to its virtual blanket authority was that it could not launch airborne collection platforms on its own – that required a JCS go-ahead.[25]

At its creation in 1964, DEFSMAC had [redacted] NSA billets, to twenty-three for DIA. Its first director (and all thereafter) was an NSA official, Charles Tevis, while the deputy was a DIA official.[26]

Charles Tevis

The Advent of the Command Center

Present-day NSOC and the plethora of round-the-clock watch operations that Agency workers know evolved slowly over a long period of time. The key date in its evolution was October 1962 – the Cuban Missile Crisis. But the development began years before that.

AFSA had had a shift operation, established originally to monitor developments [redacted] during the Korean War. It was part of AFSA-25, the organization that dealt with customers, and, within that organization, the publications and distribution branch. Manned originally by a staff of two junior officers and several analysts and enlisted communicators per shift, it scanned outgoing messages for release and maintained a liaison group to answer requests for information. After NSA was created, it became known as the Prod Watch Office, or PWO, but proposals to give it executive powers were scotched whenever they came up. In 1954 it became responsible for the director's daily intelligence briefing, and when the Critic program was created in 1958, the PWO insured that all Critics had the correct external and internal addressees. But when real horsepower was needed, the PWO called in day workers.