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Chief, ICAPS

19 March 1948

Assistant Director for Collection and Dissemination

Scientific Attaches and Related Problems

Refs. : (a) Memo, DCI, dtd 9 Mar 1948, subj: IAC Agenda
(b) Memo, Asst. Dir., C&D, dtd 26 Sept 1947, to ICAPS, subj:
Appointment of Scientific Attaches

1. This office has studied the proposals contained in reference (a) and the enclosures thereto.

SCIENTIFIC ATTACHES

2. OCD has constantly viewed the appointment of scientific attaches as a necessary step towards solution of the present difficulties attending the collection of scientific information. This office, therefore, concurs in the present effort to secure action on this matter by the National Security Council.

3. The opinions of this office with respect to the establishment of a system of scientific attaches were stated in OCD memorandum of 26 September 1947 (reference (b)). In brief these were that one of the IAC agencies be persuaded to establish and maintain scientific attaches abroad; that, if necessary, the CIA offer financial assistance to encourage one of the agencies to assume this responsibility; or that, if no IAC member agency proves willing to accept the obligation, even with financial assistance, the CIA establish and administer a system of scientific attaches as a service of common concern. These opinions are re-affirmed with amplifications as hereinafter expressed.

4. From a collection and dissemination standpoint the most important consideration in the appointment of scientific attaches is that they should serve the legitimate scientific interests of all agencies, regardless of the administering agency. Should the CIA be obliged to appoint scientific attaches, this feature will be adequately provided for. However, should one of the IAC agencies undertake the task, it is believed that a clear understanding of the interdepartmental aspects of the program should be obtained prior to implementation. Specifically, it is felt that the coordinating authority of the CIA should be adequately expressed and that this authority should categorically extend to serving collection requests upon the administering agency without regard to the dominant scientific interest, if any, of that agency. Similarly, the CIA should have discretionary powers in the dissemination of the scientific information collected, subject to such special controls as may be required.

5. Problems in connection with scientific attaches cannot be considered in detail until an agency has accepted responsibility for the program. The following general comments, however, are made with respect to problems stated in paragraph 2 of the agenda:

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a. This office is not competent to pass upon the scientific qualifications of persons to be attaches, except that they should be selected, among other things, for qualities expected of other field collectors, and that they should be competent to appraise scientific trends other than in their own specialties.

b. As a practical matter the agency administering the system should have a considerable amount of control over recruitment. However, the difficulty of obtaining competent scientists for government service and the necessity for providing for all scientific interests may indicate that it is desirable to establish a suitable interdepartmental advisory panel for the selection of attaches.

c. Scientific attaches should work in the manner prescribed for other attaches in field missions under such coordinating instructions as now obtain or are published in the future.

d. OCD is now completing its Survey of the Intelligence Potential of all foreign countries. This survey will indicate, among other things, those countries which are considered by CIA and the IAC agencies to be most important from a scientific standpoint.

e. The problem of collecting scientific information behind the "Iron Curtain" is essentially the same as that for all types of intelligence information. It should be integrated into the over-all planning directed at overcoming this obstacle to collection.

f. In general, it is believed that scientific information is best collected by overt means, and that the preponderance of effort should be put into this medium. Covert collection may have to be resorted to when it is determined which essential elements cannot be had by normal overt operations.

PRODUCTION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE

6. In the foregoing discussion of scientific attaches, the production of scientific and technical intelligence has not been directly touched upon. Admittedly, the production of scientific intelligence has a most important bearing upon the collection of information. The problems of categorizing scientific endeavor and assigning appropriate departmental responsibilities are extremely complex at the present time. It is believed, nonetheless, that the appointment of scientific attaches should go forward without awaiting resolution of production problems. The situation surrounding the production of intelligence, however, emphasizes the need for definite coordinating authority being placed in CIA.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON FOREIGN SCIENTIFIC PERSONALITIES

7. OCD has no comments on this subject and interposes no objections to the Central Intelligence Directive proposed in regard thereto.

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