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IS/DIM-71/37  
15 OCT 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, CIA Records Management Board

SUBJECT: Report to the Executive Director-Comptroller

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1. We have reviewed the [redacted] CIA archives program. In our opinion the draft regulation is in sufficiently good shape for coordination throughout the Agency.

2. The statement made by the Executive Director-Comptroller that the Records Management Board should make recommendations concerning "the development and application of an Agency policy establishing an 'Office of Record' responsibility for Agency documents insofar as storage, retrieval and destruction are concerned" is not clear. If there is none, there should be an Agency policy on "Office of Record." On a priority scale, however, we would put comprehensive Directorate retention plans ahead of the problem of "Office of Record." There should also be a policy which limits records storage to essential records and provides that records should be destroyed promptly when they have outlived their usefulness. We thought there was such a policy. We don't know how retrieval fits into this picture, but obviously active records should be close at hand and inactive records held in less costly storage space. We have always assumed that Agency policy follows basic Records Management policy on these matters and that the missing ingredient has been application of the policy.

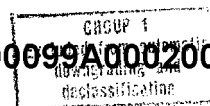
3. For approximately two years we have been working to expand the official CS Records System to include all file material of value, particularly material on managerial and policy matters. This program has been delayed for nearly a year because of a lack of computer capacity to handle the additional file codes. We have been advised that the computers will be able to handle the new codes by 15 December 1971.

4. In 1969, after coordination with the CIA/RAO, we published a CS retention plan [redacted] which encompassed material in the area divisions rather thoroughly. This instruction directed component Records Management Officers to prepare supplemental schedules to cover other unique file series. We believe that our present efforts to expand the CS Records

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System and to identify, codify, regulate and control all significant file holdings is the correct approach. When this has been accomplished, we will be in an excellent position to prepare a comprehensive retention plan, draw from it a list of permanent files and establish "Office of Record" responsibility.

5. The Executive Director-Comptroller questions the need for a policy to limit the storage of computer prepared reports at the Records Center to computer-output-microfilm (COM). We are not aware that this is a problem. For some time we have been working to substitute COM, where feasible, for computer prepared reports and other computer output. At present there are 17 COM applications in the CS and two processed for other Directorates. There has been no problem with CS components on this score. Within the next several weeks a large volume of index cards in IS/IP Vital Records will be destroyed and replaced with COM. The determination of the storage medium should be based on a systems analysis which considers such matters as user requirements, update frequency, size of data base, etc.

6. The Agency should not establish a policy which prohibits storage of hard copy computer output at the Records Center. We would not suggest that every short report available in computer language be converted to microfilm via COM for storage at the Records Center or that computer tape could not be stored at the Records Center. We will probably find it desirable to store some information in tape format. If there is a need for a policy, it should specify that COM should be used whenever feasible in lieu of paper output. In this connection we suggest that the Board recommend an Agency policy to the effect that hard copy be destroyed after documents are photographed.

7. There is merit in the Board considering such questions as those raised in Col. White's memorandum. Unfortunately, neither the Board nor Col. White's questions have gotten to the heart of the problem. The Agency has a poor track record in records matters because top management has given it insufficient attention, does not understand what it can and should accomplish and because we cannot attract outstanding young people with the limited career opportunities available. Until information management is recognized as a profession, given stature and placed high enough in the organization to receive the attention of senior officers, it will not be able to do an effective job and the Agency will continue to pay a high price both operationally and economically for the neglect. Even at this late date, some large Agency components do not have full-time RMO's. In some cases the RMO's are too junior in grade and experience to be effective. In the CS two senior RMO jobs have recently been abolished as the result of personnel cuts.

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8. The Agency information management program needs dynamic leadership at a high level. The efforts of Information Managers and Computer Specialists requires closer coordination. To this end the CS has recently appointed a senior officer to direct its program. Until Agency management gives the matter the attention it deserves and appoints a highly competent officer who has its confidence and support, many components will continue to pay lip service to the many problems of information management. As a first step to correct this condition the Records Management Board should recommend that information management be elevated in the hierarchy and a Deputy or Special Assistant for Information Management appointed on the Executive Director-Comptroller's staff.

  
DDP Records Management Officer

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