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13 October 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Historical Staff

SUBJECT: Introductory Comments on Country-level
Approach to the History of the Clandestine Services

1. Preparing the organizational or functional history of any Clandestine Services segment is at once a creative and a tedious job. The identification of the stages or phases of our program as it parallels shifts in US policy, the vicissitudes of a foreign government or the movement of key staff officers becomes an intriguing exercise. To develop such a story into a factual and fluid account is a stimulating challenge. One must surely be an inventor of no mean proportions to develop the means and create the tools to cope with the many aspects of each CS activity. In any sense of the word this would be a constructive task of real benefit to the Agency and in particular the officers of the DD/P.

2. The Clandestine Services have relied too heavily and too long on the word-of-mouth technique for passing along contributing experiences and valuable lessons learned. The shifting of priorities, with a build-up in one area while there is a balancing decrescendo elsewhere, carries with it a natural lag in the transfer of our experiences, if indeed the transfer occurs at all. Also the growth of the Clandestine Services, even with our present well-organized and numerous training courses, makes informal and sporadic reporting on our activities an inadequate method for reviewing the past and shaping the future fulfillment of our responsibilities.

3. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to apply more systematic procedures in recording that which is now undocumented or which is obscured by the transfers of our officers or the meandering shifts within their operational assignments. Between assignments each officer should prepare a brief paper, of not more than a few pages, covering the work which he has just left. This statement should

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include at least a general critique of his activities, non-Agency individuals with whom he worked (agents in cryptonym), effectiveness of his operations, unusual problems faced and how solved, accomplishments, and subject, date and control number of studies, recommendations or "think pieces" of any type (other than intelligence and project reporting) which the officer has prepared. Critiques of this type would go a long way toward filling the enormous gaps, in the pattern of Clandestine Services experience, which appear in the record.

4. Each country desk should maintain a project folder. Such a folder can provide invaluable continuity as well as a catalog of all operations previously attempted, with their purposes and the ultimate reasons for termination. Active projects can always be found at the desk, but terminated projects are either not brought to the attention of new officers or if informally discussed are usually not requested from the document center for careful review. The project outline, project approval, project termination, an outline of major changes -- policy, purpose, substance and support -- if such pertain, and a listing of agent assets involved in the project should compose the packet of five to ten pages on each project. The only analytical effort would be in preparing the outline of major changes. It is conceived that this might be prepared most efficiently by the headquarters case officer, after the sign-off on the project termination, before the project is forwarded for release to the document center. The desk's master project folder should hold a running list of all projects with purpose, date of approval, primary or sub-projects, and date of termination (if and when terminated).

5. We should know what officers have been responsible for or assisted in carrying out our program at any period in history and in any part of the world. The DD/P desk should systematically maintain a chronological set of all approved tables of organization, and personnel assigned to that desk and the country supported. Today it would be impossible, without the examination of thousands of 201 folders, to definitively list those officers who have served the Agency in [redacted] or any other country. When it becomes necessary for us to call for such information in order to quickly compose a specialized task force to cover an emergency situation

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our files are found wanting. (Payroll records, with name and field allotment only, are not in any geographical order and are filed under covering vouchers which would have to be individually identified after tracking down the covering field dispatch. These payroll records, if they could be located pay period by pay period, would have to be manually reviewed and extracted. They do not carry the grade or position of the individual. The Central Processing lists, prepared at irregular intervals, carry name, grade, country of destination, general job title (ops officer), career designation, and ETA. These only go back to 1959 in the Master File in Central Processing.)

6. It can be seen that with a minimum of effort the individual desks can plug many of the present holes. Such action should facilitate the orderly review and processing of CS operations and eventually contribute to the full round-up of our activities in a particular country. Special studies and reviews of unique and isolated segments of our program are of value and should be identified and brought together by the officer on the branch or desk who has the responsibility for holding the historical material for the country.

7. Steps will have to be taken which will permit a more orderly resurrection and use of our archival material. Against taking such steps it may be argued that:

a. "Maintenance of post facto records and copies of reports which have long since served their purpose takes too much time and borders on wastefulness." Actually a file of such abbreviated information builds a continuity at the desk level and saves a tremendous amount of time for new officers -- station chiefs and desk chiefs on down -- who are attempting to get read into their new responsibilities. Also there is a satisfaction in the thoroughness which is reflected in records thus assembled and systematized; all of this actually saves time and builds confidence in our officer corps.

b. "These new responsibilities will place an additional and unwarranted workload on the desks." The largest effort, namely that of summarizing terminated projects, will be spread rather thinly across the desks of all headquarters case officers, probably averaging only four or five per year per officer. These men who have the greatest knowledge of project activities are

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best qualified for this task. The only other new obligation which this system would bring is the preparation of the personal critiques of the job just left. Since these would be prepared between assignments -- usually during TDYs -- the burden would be slight.

c. "There will be little demand for these assembled records except by historians." Such correlated material can greatly simplify and speed the briefing and debriefing process. It also would be of great value and save much time in the preparation of responses to urgent higher level requests. Material thus brought together would serve as a ready backstop for chiefs of station, branch chiefs, and desk officers in testing their opinions and judgments of new demands and shifting programs.

d. "Reports from officers at the conclusion of a job or from case officers concerning their projects will be too subjective." The Clandestine Service is young and vigorous. Its strength and life is spurred on by the inventiveness and creativeness of its officers. We need in the record the resource which new ideas and opinions can give to it. We need the human critique, warm and personal, to give pointed meaning and depth to the more formal, standardized project and administrative reporting. Many gaps in routine reporting patterns can be filled through this device.

8. In accord with the above and from experience in the current drafting of a history of our activities in Vietnam, I recommend to the DD/P that:

a. Each division and senior staff chief of the CS designate a senior officer on his immediate staff as his coordinator for historical reporting and recording.


b. Each division and staff chief select an appropriate position (CI position is recommended or Reports Officer) at desk level and designate the incumbent as responsible officer for the maintenance of such records and files for reference as may be recommended by the CS historical board and approved by the DD/P.

9. This proposal would in effect provide a structure for halting the slippage and plug many voids in the recoverability of valuable information in our archival

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system. It would provide the framework of reference and continuity by which isolated studies, reports and debriefings can be supported. Such are then available as a resort to future analysts and chroniclers.

10. A procedure for drafting the chronicles of the CS -- and one which has held my firm conviction since I began the preparations for the chronicle of our activities in Vietnam late in 1963 -- has been admirably presented in  Memorandum For: Chief, Historical Staff, dated 21 May 1964, paragraphs 6, 7, and 8. To perform adequately an historian must be able to locate and acquire that which has gone before. In some cases large segments of files overseas have been destroyed as a security precaution. Often all copies of a document are destroyed because it is considered marginal, subjective or an initial proposal which may be followed later by a formalized

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11. An officer(s) selected to draft a section to the CS history must be able to retrieve material from the document center (presuming such documentation has been arranged in a retrievable pattern) and have access to current files. Also he will invariably be called upon to plug the holes in the historical record and to add poignant meaning to otherwise sterile fact through selective debriefings of knowledgeable persons. The selection of the drafting officers is doubly important for what they will produce is at once an historical presentation and an instrument for training and guiding CS officers in the future. From such papers we should be able to develop a greater clarity in approaching our operations, a firmness and resilience in our purpose, a keener edge to our techniques, and a more pointed application of our methods.

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