

ORD-7417-67

29 December 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Research and Development

SUBJECT: Comments on Proposal for Establishment
of Management Structure for COINS
System

REFERENCE: Draft Memo (ORD-9121-67)

In the material following we offer our comments of the document referenced above.

1. The intent of the proposal to establish a management mechanism for COINS is very much needed and desirable.

2. Although the general objectives which have been set forth for COINS to improve the interchange of information between intelligence agencies is most important and entirely acceptable, there are questions which should be raised regarding the method and feasibility of how COINS is to function and whom it will serve, which should be answered before mechanisms leading to an operational system should be set up.

3. The draft document gives the impression that we will eventually have an operational COINS system. While we agree that we should strive to achieve a means to satisfy the requirements in this area, we question whether there is any good basis for the expectation that we can have a feasible, dynamic, inter-agency system within cost bounds, with real-time response capability, that will serve the needs of individuals using intelligence data.

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4. One can question whether rapid developments in computer technology may not make a dynamic net-work approach, such as has been suggested for COINS, a less desirable system objective. Possibly advances in costs of data storage in machine systems and the ease of replication of massive data files may make a "distributed data approach" a reasonable possibility. Possibly each agency would be responsible for updating data bases of interest to the community and providing these by conventional data transmission means to the machine system centers for each agency.

5. Experimental work carried on thus far in the IPRD in an on-line environment with a variety of data of interest to analysts has shown that there is relatively low interest in a basic data file, but there is much higher interest in organized subsets of the basic files. We question whether individuals will find satisfying usage of a dynamic on-line interagency network data system especially if the response times are not of the order of a second or two.

6. The point of the remarks given above is not that we should not strive for the COINS objectives but that we should not set up an elaborate interagency system until the nature of the functions of the system are clearly established and the feasibility of performing these functions to the satisfaction of system users within realistic cost bounds, has been demonstrated.

7. We would suggest, therefore, that the draft memo be suitably modified to point toward the attainment of the first order objective, the design of COINS system functions to serve user needs, and to establish the feasibility of the proposed design.



Chief, Analysis
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