

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT TRUMAN

TO GENERAL DONOVAN

20 September 1945

The letter belongs in this collection of documents because of its reference in the third paragraph to "the development of a coordinated system of foreign intelligence within the permanent framework of the Government." If it were indicative of nothing else this statement would show that the idea of having an American peace-time, centralized intelligence service had gained sufficient acceptability to permit of public mention without danger of again exciting cries of "Gestapo."

The letter is also interesting because of its clear indication of the President's desire to preserve the assets of OSS for use in peace-time intelligence work. Somewhat similar phraseology was used in the directive transferring the intelligence procurement branches of OSS to the War Department, and it was echoed in the specific directives issued by Secretary Patterson and Assistant Secretary McCloy to General Magruder, who had been asked by them to take over direction of what was then entitled "The Strategic Services Unit" of the War Department.

C O P Y

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20 September 1945

My dear General Donovan:

I appreciate very much the work which you and your staff undertook, beginning prior to the Japanese surrender, to liquidate those wartime activities of the Office of Strategic Services which will not be needed in time of peace.

Timely steps should also be taken to conserve those resources and skills developed within your organization which are vital to our peacetime purposes.

Accordingly, I have today directed, by Executive order, that the activities of the Research and Analysis Branch and the Presentation Branch of the Office of Strategic Services be transferred to the State Department. This transfer, which is effective as of October 1, 1945, represents the beginning of the development of a coordinated system of foreign intelligence within the permanent framework of the Government.

Consistent with the foregoing, the Executive order provides for the transfer of the remaining activities of the Office of Strategic Services to the War Department; for the abolition of the Office of Strategic Services; and for the continued orderly liquidation of some of the activities of the Office without interrupting other services of a military nature the need for which will continue for some time.

I want to take this occasion to thank you for the capable leadership you have brought to a vital wartime activity in your capacity as Director of Strategic Services. You may well find satisfaction in the achievements of the Office and take pride in your own contribution to them. These are in themselves large rewards. Great additional reward for your efforts should lie in the knowledge that the peacetime intelligence services of the Government are being erected on the foundation of the facilities and resources mobilized through the Office of Strategic Services during the war.

Sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

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ESTABLISHMENT OF A WAR DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE
UNDER ASSISTANT SECRETARY LOVETT TO STUDY
THE PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE.

In view of the recent appointment of Mr. Lovett as Undersecretary of State it is of particular interest to note that he headed this committee. The instructions which he gave to the committee members are sufficiently detailed as to indicate on the part of the Chairman a very considerable grasp of the problems involved.

This committee is of particular importance in that its recommendations, as later documents will prove, had a very marked influence on the final form of the directive establishing the National Intelligence Authority.

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23 October 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, OPERATIONS DIVISION
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF AIR STAFF - 2
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2, AGF
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, ASF
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC SERVICES UNIT
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PLANNING DIVISION, WD
SPECIAL STAFF

Subject: Report on Intelligence Matters.

1. The Secretary of War has appointed the following committee to advise him on certain intelligence matters, particularly those relating to the subject of the foreign intelligence activities of the Nation and of the War Department:

Robert A. Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War
for Air - Chairman
Major General H. A. Craig, OPD
Major General E. R. Quesada, AAF
Major General W. G. Wyman, AGF
Colonel J. M. Romner, ASF
Brigadier General John Magruder, SSU
Brigadier General C. W. Clarke, G-2

2. The above committee has been directed to make a preliminary report to the Secretary of War not later than 3 November 1945. It is most anxious to have the benefit of the views and recommendations of the individuals to whom this memorandum is addressed at the outset of its consideration of the various problems involved.

3. Each of the individuals to whom this memorandum is addressed is therefore requested to furnish to the undersigned not later than 27 October 1945 a report covering the following subjects, as fully as possible in the time available:

PART I

a. The organization of the individual's particular unit as now constituted, together with a statement of the functions discharged thereby based on current directives and practices.

b. A description of the relations that have existed between the individual's unit and other intelligence units in the government during the period of the war.

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c. A frank appraisal of the operations of the individual's unit during the war period, with particular reference to the fields in which it is believed intelligence service could have been improved.

d. A frank appraisal of the over-all operations of all government intelligence units during the course of the war, with particular reference to those in the War Department and the Office of Strategic Services. This part of the report should contain the writer's opinion as to the existence of unnecessary duplication, and also of lack of coordination, if any, between the various government intelligence units.

e. Such other comments as the writer regards as pertinent on the over-all intelligence organization of the United States Government during the war period.

PART II

a. The individual's recommendations as to the most desirable organization and program for the foreign intelligence activities of the United States Government for the future. There should be included here the writer's views with respect to the desirability of establishing a central foreign intelligence unit, the place or department in the Federal Government where this unit should be located, and the broad functions, responsibilities and composition of such a central unit. If a central intelligence unit is advocated the report should contain the writer's views as to whether its functions should include those of the collection of information, or whether it should be limited to such matters as research, analysis and evaluation, and dissemination.

b. A statement of the field that should be covered by the War Department in the over-all government intelligence program. This part of the report should indicate the relationship that should exist between the War Department intelligence agencies and the central agency, if recommended, and also the relation between the War Department agencies and intelligence agencies created in other departments.

c. A brief statement as to the scope of the intelligence functions that should be performed under the recommended plan by the Navy, the State Department and other individual government departments.

d. A description of the recommended division within the War Department of the intelligence functions which, under the plan proposed, are to be assigned to the War Department.

e. Recommendations as to the immediate disposition or assignment that should be made within the War Department, or elsewhere, of the personnel, facilities and functions of the various units of the former OSS organization, which have been recently transferred to the War Department.

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4. The above reports are to set forth the opinions of the individuals to whom this memorandum is addressed, and need not represent the formal conclusions of the units to which the individuals belong. However, each individual is requested to consult freely with the officers in important positions in his unit, and if views are held by others in the unit which differ radically from those expressed in the reports, either a statement to that effect should be appended, or memoranda setting forth the differing views should be submitted.

5. Reports are to be submitted directly to the undersigned without formal clearance through channels. Eight copies of each report are desired.

By direction of the Secretary of War:

ROBERT A LOVETT
Assistant Secretary of War for Air

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