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Acting Chief of Station, Vienna

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Chief, FBI

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Operational

ICEBERG

REF: VIEN 2896, 16 June 1949; VIEN 2909, 21 June 1949
KARL 5185, 20 June 1949; WASH 5462, 21 June 1949

1. As we indicated in our cable of 21 June, the ICEBERG program is being reconsidered. In the Spring of 1948, when the program was initiated, crisis in Central Europe appeared to be imminent to many. Consequently, emphasis was placed on the immediate need to provide communications without reference to the expendability of the networks involved. Now, however, there seems little likelihood of an immediate crisis. As a result the program is up for review and revision to meet the requirements of the present situation. There is general agreement in this office, after discussions with [] and other persons concerned, that the current need is to work out a set of guiding principles upon which to base an ICEBERG program, taking advantage of the prolonged armistice (to apply a minimum interpretation of current events).

2. Discussions are taking place on an organization wide basis in the effort to arrive at standards, technical, security, et al, for ICEBERG in all its aspects. Pending publication of a general policy in this matter, we shall outline here certain operational principles which we should like to see followed in the future recruitment of operators. We do not think that these will conflict with technical standards and requirements. Needless to say, we shall welcome your comments and suggestions on the lines of action discussed below.

3. It is probably inevitable that isolated radio sets and signal plans and individual agents and networks will be exposed within a fairly short period after the beginning of hostilities or occupation of an area by an hostile element. This is one of the calculated risks on which any stay-behind program as such is based. Experience in World War II has shown that such cases need not blow the communications system as a whole. In this respect, we are more concerned with the possibility of captured sets being used to "play back" to our base than with their being discovered and/or captured.

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4. Since the W/T operator provides the mechanically traceable link between covert agent personnel and the directing base, his security and discipline are of paramount importance. If he or the custodian of equipment (including one-time pads and signal plans) fails to observe the most rigid discipline, he exposes us to the hazards of "playing back" as well as to the discovery and annihilation of our stay-behind network. The W/T man also provides the only personal, "physical" contact between the network and the base, in the sense that the physical characteristics of his sending technique become well known to the base operator with whom he maintains contact. If he is captured and someone else attempts to contact the base with his set, the difference in touch can alert the base to the fact that something has gone wrong. If, however, he is doubled against us, he provides the enemy with an ideal channel for deception material, to a greater degree than any other category of agent personnel. Add to these considerations the fact that the stay-behind radio operator is subject to strains not required of the currently reporting agent,--(a) the psychological strain of inaction over a long period of time, and (b) the strain of having to act, when finally called upon to do so, under the most adverse and hazardous conditions, -- the reasons for hypersensitivity in regard to his security become obvious. Any person recruited for this type of work must have the complete confidence of the organization beyond any reasonable doubt as to his loyalty, discretion, discipline and stability. Such confidence can be based only on a most careful assessment based on the best information available.

5. As a practical implementation of principle stated in paragraph 3, we propose that apart from normal project requirements, no W/T candidate will be approved for training until a complete Personal Record Form has been submitted. This does not seem to be unreasonable. If a person has the confidence of the organization to the extent that he is proposed for training in a secret technique, it is possible to obtain a detailed curriculum vitae from him without resorting to subterfuge.

6. Although, as you know, there are two types of equipment and training, the Red plan, more highly classified, and the Blue, less so, for use in different types of stay-behind operations, we must not infer that an effort to ensure security can be less in recruiting for the one than for the other. Even though a man may be recruited for a Blue type operation, which is regarded as more expendable, we still should require as complete as possible information concerning him. From a strictly practical point of view, we must recognize the fact that training facilities are limited. It would be extremely foolish to waste time and effort in training operators on whose services we could not depend in an emergency, whatever their particular level or assignment may be.

7. Another principle to bear in mind is this: The recruitment of ICEBERG personnel (whether operators or custodians of equipment) must be such that they cannot be compromised later by virtue of any foreseeable hazard inherent in the recruitment itself. To be more explicit:

A. They should not be chosen from the ranks of agent personnel which is or may be in any way compromised. No member of a chain which is suspected of being penetrated; no lone agent who has had any previous intelligence connection with a blown agent or case officer; no candidate proposed by actually or possibly compromised personnel should have anything to do with ICEBERG.

B. No two ICEBERG candidates should be known to each other.

C. No more than one ICEBERG candidate should be recruited on the recommendation of any one agent.

D. No chief agent of a large reporting network should be allowed to recommend candidates, because of the danger of penetration of his activities.

E. No recruiting out-out or agent should be briefed as to the precise or long-range nature of the work in mind for the personnel he is to spot or recommend. He should be given a general brief only as to requirements, such as courage, technical aptitude, basic stability, loyalty, etc. He will no doubt propose candidates whose training would be impractical because of their non-availability in time of crisis (e.g., able-bodied young man subject to army or labor draft), but these can be screened out by the case officers. Even with highly trusted indigenous agents such deception must be practiced. We cannot make out clearly from the correspondence in our files to what extent the agents who have suggested candidates have been briefed, but we assume that their briefing has been general.

8. We recognize only too well that the restrictions outlined above added to the difficulties already generally recognized, — the problem of finding recruits who will be available in an emergency situation, the fact that persons with previous training in the necessary technique are likely to be or become known to the Soviets, and the fact that persons without previous practice in the technique probably lack aptitude and are difficult to train, — make the program of recruitment extremely difficult. We certainly do not wish you to feel that we are unappreciative of the efforts you are making and have made to find suitable candidates, even though your requests for approval have met with an almost consistent "No" for an answer.

9. We have no set of blue-prints to offer for a successful recruiting program. Local conditions obviously affect such an enterprise. However, as an example of one imaginative means of going about the problem, we can cite the effort of another station in an occupied area. After consideration of the categories of personnel who might best be available in time of need, and who might have the greatest aptitude in the necessary skill, it was decided to explore the possibilities among disabled veterans of the recent war. A request was made to the Signal Corps to screen veterans in military hospitals in the area for employment as teletype operators. A survey was

made on the basis of the Signal Corps' current need for such operators, and background histories of suitable candidates obtained. These were turned over to our staff for further screening and checking of the personal histories as given by the more interesting prospects. A number of likely candidates were turned up without involving any of the station's current operations. Only one Signal Corps officer had been briefed on our interests in relatively general terms.

101. Granted that suitable recruits are found, there are still restrictions to be observed in their handling.

A. An approved radio candidate must have no connection with any other current intelligence operation. If he has been recruited from an existing operation, he must be cut out of it if he is approved.

B. An approved radio operator must engage in no other intelligence activity.

C. Although plans may be made for his secure hook-in to a covert agent or network, the actual introductions should be postponed until the last possible moment. A system of recognition symbols, duly approved here, may be laid on, but actual knowledge of identities should not be exchanged. (We are sure that you share our gratitude to the Providence that prevented [redacted] and [redacted] from meeting last fall, through no fault of our own, prior to [redacted]'s enforced evacuation.) In this connection, it is important that plans for the hook-in to a particular operation be made at the time the operator is recruited, since the type and particulars of his training will depend upon his future assignment. He himself need not know the personalities involved, but he must be prepared as far as possible to meet whatever special conditions may be required of him.

D. It goes without saying that all training and all meetings of ICEBERG candidates, trainees, and operators must be conducted in the most secure fashion possible.

11. So far as the caching of equipment is concerned, we realize that it may be necessary to involve indigenous personnel to some extent. We can see no harm in allowing a known and trusted agent to conceal a radio for us so long as there is no hint of possible compromise. In the case of [redacted], our request that the set be withdrawn from his possession was based on the possibility of his being compromised through his association with [redacted].

12. The principles stated above affect the status of our current ICEBERG operations considerably. The four candidates proposed in your cable 2896 should be reviewed in the light of the revised program as a whole.

1921

advised to [redacted]

A. [redacted] and [redacted]: Even though approval has once been granted for their training, we should prefer to suspend that approval pending a re-examination of their situation. From the files, we have had a general impression that they might be compromised because of their respective connections with [redacted] and [redacted]. However, [redacted] has clarified the operational handling in these cases, and the hazards involved seem to have been overcome or are capable of being overcome. In both cases we should have full Personal Record Forms and an account of what security hazards actually do exist because of previous intelligence connections.

advised to [redacted]

B. [redacted] Here again we must have complete biographical information on which to base an intelligent decision. From the available reports we cannot do such. His threat to take to the hills in the event of hostilities is not exactly reassuring, but such a remark could be attributable to flippancy or some equally inconsequential characteristic, if more were known about the man as a whole.

C. [redacted] Although he has had no known connection with [redacted], he appears to be acquainted with a number of persons associated with [redacted] at the time of the latter's arrest. While we may be hyper-cautious, we cannot see our way clear to granting approval for the use of anyone even remotely linked with this operation.

13. We hope that the proposed meeting between [redacted] and [redacted] suggested in your exchange of cables with Karlsruhe can take place shortly. We shall appreciate any comments you may have, individually and severally, on your particular operational aspects of the problem.

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cc: Karlsruhe