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DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
Intelligence Community Staff
Washington, D.C. 20505

ICS 0858-90
12 April 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members, DCI Security Forum

FROM: 

SUBJECT: Project SLAMMER Interim Report (U)

As members will recall, Project SLAMMER is an innovative Community research program using state-of-the-art behavioral science techniques. The intent is to better understand and deter espionage through the direct assessment of convicted American spies. The interim report attached reflects much of the more recent work of the group engaged in the project. This program is conducted under the sponsorship of the Personnel Security Committee (PSC) of the Advisory Group/Security Countermeasures (AG/SCM), with personnel from the various Community organizations participating. The report is provided to Forum members for information, with the permission of the Chairman, PSC. Any comments you wish to offer are welcomed and may be submitted to  directly or through CCISCMO.

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Attachment:
a/s

253-1106-51X

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Project Slammer Interim Progress Report
Submitted to [REDACTED]
Chairman, Personnel Security Committee
15 December 1989

SLAMMER-GRAM

This is an interim presentation of observations developing in the progress of Project Slammer, an Intelligence Community sponsored study of espionage. This research examines espionage by interviewing and psychologically assessing actual espionage subjects. Additionally, persons knowledgeable of subjects are contacted to better understand the subjects' private lives and how they are perceived by others while conducting espionage. This "Slammer-gram" briefly shares subjects' self-perceptions and some of the implications that might be considered in view of these insights. To date, cases studied have involved only male subjects, the majority of whom were volunteers in initiating espionage. The following observations are offered with the caveat that this is work in progress, each issue is worthy of continuing study and will be reported in greater depth in the next formal report scheduled for release in June, 1990.

HOW THE ESPIONAGE SUBJECT SEES HIMSELF (at the time he initiates espionage)

He believes:

- He is special, even unique.
- He is deserving.
- His situation is not satisfactory.
- He has no other (easier) option (than to engage in espionage).
- He is only doing what others frequently do.
- He is not a bad person.
- His performance in his government job (if presently employed) is separate from espionage; espionage does not (really) discount his contribution in the workplace.
- Security procedures do not (really) apply to him.
- Security programs (e.g., briefings) have no meaning for him, unless they connect with something with which he can personally identify.



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He feels isolated from the consequences of his actions:

- He sees his situation in a context in which he faces continually narrowing options, until espionage seems reasonable. The process that evolves into espionage reduces barriers, making it essentially "Okay" to initiate the crime.
- He sees espionage as a "Victimless" crime.
- Once he considers espionage, he figures out how he might do it. These are mutually reinforcing, often simultaneous events.
- He finds that it is easy to go around security safeguards (he is able to solve that problem). He belittles the security system, feeling that if the information was really important espionage would be hard to do (the information would really be better protected). This "Ease of accomplishment" further reinforces his resolve.

He attempts to cope with espionage activity:

- He is anxious on initial HOIS contact (some also feel thrill and excitement).
- After a relationship with espionage activity and HOIS develops, the process becomes much more bearable, espionage continues (even flourishes).
- In the course of long term activity subjects may reconsider their involvement.
 - Some consider breaking their role to become an operative for the government. This occurs when access to classified information is lost or there is a perceived need to prove themselves, or both.
 - Others find that espionage activity becomes stressful, they no longer want it. Glamour (if present earlier) subsides. They are reluctant to continue. They may even break contact.
 - Sometimes they consider telling authorities what they have done. Those wanting to reverse their role aren't confessing, they're negotiating. Those who are "Stressed out" want to confess. Neither wants punishment. Both attempt to minimize or avoid punishment.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT IMPLICATIONS

- The security measure that was consistently most effective was the polygraph.
- Aside from polygraph, security procedures are not viewed as obstacles to espionage. Security procedures are seen by subjects only as inconveniences.
- Changes in affluence or travel abroad are easily (although falsely) explained. Explanations are rarely challenged; if so the reasons given are accepted by those who inquire.
- Espionage subjects don't see themselves as traitors. Their acts are usually sustained with some measure of comfort and self justification.
- The security briefings that seem to have any impact on this group have something in the message with which the subject can personally identify. Among the areas subjects have suggested are, the acknowledgement of espionage as appearing reasonable to those who do it, that (in time) the honeymoon is over and glamour turns to threat, and that some subjects may want to come in from the cold, but they don't know how to do that (without taking a deep plunge into punishment).
- It is not until after they have been apprehended that they feel remorse, which is perceived in personal terms, such as their own stress and pain caused to loved ones. National security issues are of little or no relevance.
- Subjects sometimes do think about turning themselves in, but they are not sure how to do that. Trying to find out (how) has risks so high that they can be scared away. The community may wish to consider procedures so that subjects can (from their perspective) more readily approach authorities.
- Subjects often tell people close to them what they are doing, and sometimes even engage associates in the process. Former intimates (spouses, lovers, close friends - people with whom they spent a good deal of time) are a potentially important source of information in all investigations.
- Subjects almost invariably conceive of committing espionage after they are in a position of trust. While initial screening continues to be important, focusing on update and monitoring procedures seems increasingly worthwhile.