

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Oct. 29, 1943

STATEMENT FOR MR. CHESTON IN THE MATTER OF ROBERT E. LANG

The officer in charge of Cryptographic Security and Message Center work for the North African Theatre has lost his health and it is necessary that he be replaced. The special reasons why it is desired that Sgt. Lang be commissioned and sent to the North African Theatre for this job are as follows:

The work to be done in North Africa from the Message Center point of view is roughly as follows: The main Message Center at Algiers handles all the OSS classified traffic to or from that point, whether to Cairo, Washington, London, and other bases or to agents and operators in the field. It is now planned also to set up a Message Center somewhere in Italy as well as several smaller units mobile or otherwise in various advanced locations. The cryptographic practises and systems to be used between all these places are in a general way prescribed from Washington but obviously many local adaptations and even new systems must be set up and administered, perhaps on the spur of the moment, as circumstances change. These systems must all be of a type and of a degree of security sufficient to fit in with the OSS cryptographic network extending around the world. Only a man trained in OSS systems and procedures can do the job.

From the point of view of cryptographic security it is necessary that some person familiar with OSS cryptographic systems and the dangers and advantages thereof be in charge. Such person must have the character and authority to see to it that proper precautions are taken not only in the various Message Centers themselves but also by the originators of the messages. In other words, in OSS as distinguished from most Army organizations, the Cryptographic Security Officer and the Chief of the local Message Center are combined in the same person. To enforce the security regulations a trained officer is necessary.

The administrative job to be done in connection with setting up the new center in Italy and the other minor bases, the movement of personnel and equipment to these places is of utmost importance. The handling of the personnel (all of which have been chosen and sent out from here) and the proper assignment of the personnel best suited to doing the various

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cryptographic, machine, paraphrasing and other jobs calls for a specially trained man--one who has both the ability and the authority to handle the men and women stationed in the various widely separated locations in which they are likely to be, and who also knows the actual capabilities and weaknesses of his personnel. It is not as though we were operating with a large staff whose numbers could take the place of specialized training or abilities. On the contrary whoever is in charge will have to make the best of some 35 persons using each to the limit of his or her capabilities. The man to do this job must not only be an officer but must also be someone who knows his personnel and is a good executive.

Sgt. Lang, though not yet quite 28 has the education and the ability for this job. After graduation from Dartmouth he was appointed Graduate Manager of Non-athletic activities. In this position he was placed in the delicate position of supervising and coordinating the work of some 15 faculty directors of non-athletic organizations, all of whom were many years his senior both in years and in term of service with the college. The details of this work were carried out with the aid of a constantly changing personnel chosen from among the members of the undergraduate body. In this capacity he became involved to a considerable extent in personnel work in keeping the boys at their studies when other matters got to be too much for them and in general as a younger member of the faculty, sympathetic with the boys' viewpoint, in handling difficult cases and cases where special treatment was needed.

This background of administrative and personnel work has been of the greatest value here. Lang has handled all the administrative and personnel work for the Washington Message Center and has been in sole charge of the recruiting campaign. He has interviewed and personally selected all the personnel now working here as well as all those who have gone to North Africa.

So far as his character is concerned Lang is responsible, level-headed, excellent at the handling of personnel and at getting the most from his workers in a most friendly way and an excellent morale builder. He has foresight. Can take orders. Has an unusual ability to get along with and for that matter get his way with his superiors when necessary. This combination in a single man is in a certain sense unique and suggests that not many men from elsewhere could be found with the same varying abilities.

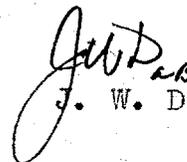
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An officer is needed for the job in North Africa if it is to be properly handled. It seems unlikely that a man of similar background, capabilities, and knowledge can be found in the Army. Sgt. Lang has grown up with our systems having been with the OSS Message Center since March 1942 either as a civilian or in the Army. During this period he has grown up with the Message Center having at one time or another held every supervisory position in the office until, at the present time, he is working as Ass't. Chief. OSS systems by the nature of OSS work are not like most of the Army systems which are used between fixed, secure bases. Sgt. Lang knows these systems. It would take any other persons weeks or months to acquire a similar knowledge.

He has the ability to handle the complications of personnel and equipment to be used in the various places in the Theater. He knows the personnel and what could and can be gotten out of them as no stranger possibly could. He has demonstrated his character and ability here.

For the above reasons I recommend that Sgt. Lang be commissioned and sent to North Africa as head of Message Center work and Cryptographic Security Officer for the Theater.


J. W. Delafield