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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

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