

Origins, Missions, and Structure of CIA

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This is a brief summary of the history of the modern origin of the central intelligence concept and thus of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In 1940 the fortunes of Britain and France were at their lowest ebb. Some high-level officials of the US Government were predicting that Great Britain could not hold out against the Germans. To check on this, President Roosevelt sent Colonel William J. Donovan, prominent New York attorney and winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor as Commanding Officer of the 69th Regiment in World War I, abroad to discover and report his estimate of the situation. Donovan first visited the Mediterranean area, and on his second trip talked to leaders of both Britain and France. His report indicated that Britain would hold out, but he urged that the US immediately organize itself for global warfare. Donovan's particular interest was in the intelligence field, and he went to talk to Secretary of the Navy Knox, Secretary of War Stimson, and Attorney General Jackson about his concept of an agency which would combine intelligence with the forces of propaganda and subversion.

On 10 June 1941, Donovan proposed "a service of strategic information." This service would have an advisory panel composed of the chiefs of intelligence of the Army, the Navy, the Department of State, and the FBI. It would draw its personnel from the Army and the Navy and would also have a civilian staff. It would not displace or encroach upon the intelligence prerogatives of the established departments, although it would collect information independently. This was the start of the Office

of the Coordinator of Information which combined information, intelligence, and clandestine activities. In 1942, however, the Coordinator of Information was split and the Office of War Information - the predecessor of the present US Information Agency - was created and given the responsibility for all overt attributable propaganda information, and to the Office of Strategic Services went the responsibility for clandestine activities and for research and analysis of intelligence.

From the OSS the present day intelligence community inherited certain assets. Among these were records and some methods and means of procuring both overt and secret intelligence. There were certain basic counterespionage files developed with the advice and assistance of some foreign intelligence services, particularly the British. There was a considerable reservoir of knowledge of procedures for research and analysis of basic intelligence information. There were some skilled personnel. Finally, but far from last in importance, there were agreements with key foreign intelligence services.

The history of the OSS, and particularly its relationship with other US intelligence organizations during World War II, is far too detailed for discussion in this essay. But it should be noted that shortly after the creation of the Office of Strategic Services, top level officials in the US intelligence community started to hunk about a peacetime intelligence service. On 25 August 1942, Brigadier General John Magruder wrote a paper on a proposed plan for a joint intelligence bureau which would be an agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. For the next two years there was considerable discussion of this and similar papers.

On 5 October 1944 a document was originated in the office of general Donovan entitled "The Basis for a Permanent World Wide Intelligence Service." Certain of the principles enunciated in this document are interesting to note. This service would collect, analyze, and deliver intelligence on the policy or strategy level. The proposed organization would have its own means of communication and control over its secret operations. It would not interfere with departmental intelligence and it could not have any police function. An individual rather than collective responsibility for national intelligence was proposed. Finally, the director of the proposed organization would be responsible directly to the President.

It is interesting to note that Secretary of War Stimson commented on the subject of intelligence coordination in his biography "On Active

Service in Peace and War." This quotation reads: "Stimson was insistent that no impatience with its occasional eccentricities should deprive the Army of the profits of cooperation with General Donovan's Office of Strategic Services. Throughout the war the intelligence activities of the United States Government remained incompletely coordinated, but here again it was necessary to measure the profits of reorganization against its dislocations and on the whole, Stimson felt that the American achievement in this field, measured against the conditions of 1940, was more than satisfactory. A full reorganization belonged to the post war period."

On 18 January 1945, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee reported to the JCS on the subject of a central intelligence organization. The members proposed first a national intelligence authority composed of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy and the Chief of Staff to the President. There would be an advisory board consisting of the heads of the various intelligence services. The new organization would have the power to inspect the operations of the various departmental intelligence services and would have the responsibility for protecting sources and methods.

At this juncture the press got wind of the discussions for creating a new intelligence organization and, on 9 February 1945, fairly complete details appeared in the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Times Herald. There was considerable furor, and some members of Congress took a dim view of the creation of what they felt might become a peacetime "gestapo."

Shortly after this - just a few days before his death - President Roosevelt asked General Donovan to get together with the heads of the various intelligence and security services and get a consensus of views on a central service. Donovan did this and also went further and queried by letter all of the members of the Cabinet. Within the intelligence community there was general agreement that a central service might be appropriate, but there were several conflicting views as to whether it should report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the Department of State, or to the President, and there was also controversy as to whether there should be individual or collective responsibility for national intelligence. The response from the Cabinet members was varied and ranged from yes to no.

After open hostilities had ceased, as we all vividly remember, there was

almost frantic haste to demobilize not only the military services but many of the war agencies. On 20 September 1945 the OSS was disbanded. Its Research and Analysis Branch and its Presentation Unit were transferred to the Department of State, its Secret Intelligence and Special Operations Units were transferred to the Army, and the former were reserved in the Strategic Services Unit which reported to the Secretary of the Army.

On 22 October 1945 a report prepared by Ferdinand Eberstadt on possible unification of the Army and Navy recommended a central intelligence organization and a national security council. On 14 November 1945 the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy met, discussed the proposed central intelligence organization, and set up an interdepartmental working committee to attempt to arrive at a unanimous recommendation.

The end product of these reports and committees was the issuance on 22 January 1946 of the Executive order creating the Central Intelligence Group. This Executive Order reflected much of the thinking and work that had gone on during the war. A National Intelligence Authority was created, composed of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy and the Military Chief of Staff to the President. The Director of the Central Intelligence Group was designated by the President, and personnel were to be assigned from the respective departments as well as recruited from civilian life. The Director of the new Central Intelligence Group was charged by the Executive Order with preparing plans for coordination. The new organization could inspect the activities of departmental intelligence if such inspection were approved by the National Intelligence Authority. It could recommend policies and objectives. It was responsible for correlating, evaluating, and disseminating intelligence and for the performance of services of common concern and such other functions as directed. The Executive Order explicitly stated that the departments would continue to collect, evaluate, correlate, and disseminate departmental intelligence. Finally, an Intelligence Advisory Board, composed of the heads of the service intelligence agencies, was established to advise the Director of the Central Intelligence Group.

With the creation of the Central Intelligence Group there commenced a process of accretion of functions taken from the wartime agencies and from departments which were anticipating reductions in budget under peacetime conditions. The Strategic Services Unit was transferred from the Department of the Army and became the Office of Special

Operations - charged with espionage and counterespionage functions. The Washington Document Center was taken over from the Navy and shortly after that the Army's German Military Documents Center at Fort Holabird joined this unit and together became the Foreign Documents Division. The Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an organization with worldwide bases for monitoring all non-coded radio traffic, which had originally been under the Federal Communications Commission, was transferred from the Army and became the Foreign Broadcast Information Division. During World War II the Army and Navy and OSS and occasionally other agencies had all approached US businesses and institutions in search of foreign intelligence information. An early agreement was reached that this domestic collection should be performed as a service of common concern by Central Intelligence with other agencies participating as they desired, and this became the Contact Division. Another illustration of the type of functions taken on is the division of responsibilities with the Department of State on biographic intelligence. The list would be much too long if we attempted to enumerate all of the functions acquired in this method.

Slightly over a year and a half after the creation of the CIG-on 25 July 1947-the Congress, utilizing most of the features of this Executive Order, passed the National Security Act of 1947 creating the Central Intelligence Agency.

Thus, the mission of the Central Intelligence Agency becomes fairly obvious with the preceding background. The National Security Act of 1947 describes the general mission with emphasis on coordination and on performing services of common concern. It should be clearly noted also that the legislation assigns two roles to the Director of Central Intelligence and the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence - over-all coordination, as well as the role of head(s) of an Agency.

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