

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NAVAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE

Introduction

The organization now known as the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) has evolved over a period of more than 100 years from a military information service to a civilian criminal investigation organization. As the mission has changed, so has the name. Some of the many designations by which the agency has been known are: The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI); The Naval Intelligence Investigative Service (NIIS); the Naval Secret Service (NSS); ONI again; The Naval Investigative Service (NIS); The Naval Security and Investigative Command (NSIC); The Naval Investigative Service Command (NISCOM), and as of 1992, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS).

Historically this organization has been one of the least known federal investigative agencies. In her 1962 book The Federal Investigators author Miriam Ottenberg states, "...ONI insists on anonymity. As a matter of policy, ONI has consistently shied away from publicity. Typical of the Navy's reluctance to talk about its intelligence operations is the fact that they are not even mentioned in the (then) official manual covering all federal agencies. The intelligence missions of its sister services appear in the U. S. Government Organization Manual (of that time) but not ONI's."

In the beginning (1882-1915)

NCIS had its roots in the infant Navy organization that was first formed in 1882 to collect intelligence and called the "Office (sometimes Bureau) of Naval Intelligence" (henceforward ONI). Prior to that time information gathering had been done on the basis of individual enterprise.

One of the first recorded instances of intelligence gathering by the Navy was in 1846, just prior to the War with Mexico, when Navy Surgeon William Maxwell Wood undertook a spy mission deep into Mexican territory (California). [Another Navy medical officer, Rear Admiral Cecil Coggins, MD, MC, played a highly important role in Naval Intelligence in the Pacific before and during World War II. See his short biography herein.] At various times after the Civil War the Hydrographic Office gathered

data but on a somewhat sporadic basis.

The man responsible for creating an organized and structured intelligence service was Lieutenant (later Lieutenant Commander) Theodorus Bailey Myers Mason. An officer in the Bureau of Navigation (a predecessor of the present Naval Sea Systems Command) he persuaded the Secretary of the Navy, William Hunt, to create an "Office of Naval Intelligence" for the purpose of "...collecting and recording such Naval information as may be useful to the Department in time of war as well as peace". Mason served as the first director until 1885 when he volunteered for duty on an American peacekeeping expedition to Panama.

In the early years support for this enterprise was sometimes lukewarm, but there were some modest achievements; for example, the inauguration of the attache` system with the assignment of LCDR French R. Chadwick to the London Embassy. Chadwick was a future director of ONI and an important figure in its evolution.

New threats and a changing mission (1915-1939)

Even at the turn of the century ONI was primarily an information gathering service; counterintelligence and investigations were the responsibility of individual commands. It is reported that as late as 1913, when plans for the battleship PENNSYLVANIA were stolen, the Navy turned not to ONI but to the Burns Detective Agency for assistance.

The state of readiness in the years immediately before World War I was the subject of a comment by then Marine Corps Colonel John Charles Russell (later Commandant of the Marine Corps): "During the summer of 1913 I reported for duty at ONI. I found that most of the time was spent reading newspapers and filing the results. I drew up a plan for reorganization, but it met with disapproval and I was sent to Mexico."

If Col. Russell's report could be ignored, the spreading conflict in Europe could not. A rather loosely constructed Navy "General Plan", developed in 1915, assigned to Naval Intelligence the job of collecting information on domestic threats. Further impetus came in July 1916 when an enormous explosion destroyed a Jersey City munitions dock. It was called the "Black Tom" incident and was attributed to German saboteurs.

Shortly afterward a hasty program was submitted to the Chief

of Naval Operations proposing the creation of a Naval District Information Service to be headed in each district by an Aid for Information. With the advent of hostilities the true mission of counterintelligence was to emerge. In this roundabout way recognition was finally accorded to the need for a professionally directed approach. It seems to have been the basis for the first investigative effort--as opposed to information gathering--to have appeared.

The counterintelligence units under the Aids were collectively designated as the Naval Secret Service with the first investigators known as Secret Service Agents. These titles soon fell into disuse and all operatives were known as Special Agents of the Office of Naval Intelligence.

(But well before WW I ONI established covert units overseas, with agents seeded in Mexico, South America and the Caribbean. One such agent was the well known cartoonist John Held, Jr.)

Col. Russell returned from Mexico and his reorganization plan went into effect immediately. In the fall of 1916 an undercover "branch office" was opened in New York City. Others followed in the country's major seaports and industrial centers, operated by reservists and civilians (men and women). In less than three years some eighteen German spies were reportedly discovered by them.

ONI investigated the disappearance of the collier CYCLOPS in the Bermuda Triangle in 1918. The mystery was never solved, but enough information was gathered to discount the suspicion that the ship's captain, a LCDR Worley, had turned the vessel over to the Germans. This was considered a high point in ONI's history to that date.

After the end of the war ONI's size and mission were greatly reduced and the period of the 1920s were very lean years. But as the result of increasing world tension and the threat of Bolshevism, authority was granted in 1936 to hire civilian agents in the field. By 1937 fourteen agents had been brought on board on personal service contracts by the District Intelligence Officers (DIOs). (Even in the late 1950s civilian Special Agents were still contract employees. This continued until about 1969 when agents were converted to the Excepted Civil Service.)

Agents were men from various backgrounds and occupations.

They received no training whatsoever although they were used for every type of inquiry. This apparently included occasional criminal investigations in addition to what might broadly be called counterintelligence. This is the first report of criminal investigations and they were apparently carried out with only the most vague general sort of authorization; but seemingly effective.

World War II (1939-1945)

After a period of increasing unrest, the war came to Europe in 1939. As a response to these conditions an Executive Memorandum for the first time assigned direct responsibility to ONI for investigating sabotage, espionage and subversion in the Navy. Also, a limited national emergency was declared by President Roosevelt.

In 1940 reservists started to report for duty. Until that time the investigations section in headquarters consisted of only a few officers and a secretary in the old Main Navy building. Quarters suddenly became overcrowded.

In the same year, 1940, the first of several delimitation agreements came into being among ONI, FBI and other agencies. Further professional progress was demonstrated by creation of report forms and a standard case category system. A training manual was also produced (authorship is attributed to the aforementioned Dr. Cecil Coggins) and mobilization plans were updated. During 1941 reservists poured into the Naval districts to set up Zone and Unit intelligence offices, augmented by civilian agents where possible. The emphasis was still on sabotage, espionage and subversion.

From the beginning of the war Washington leadership consisted of Op-16-B-3 Section which attempted to handle investigative requests that quickly increased to almost 100,000 per year. There was still an unfortunate tendency for Commandants to view DIOs as part of their independent fiefdoms. In 1942 the Vice Chief of Naval Operations sent out a notice that intelligence officers were no longer to be used for finding such items as lost laundry and liquor bottles.

During the early part of the war there was a lack of specific instruction regarding ONI's role in investigations and counterintelligence. Until 1943 primary jurisdiction over Japanese espionage in the U. S. was exercised by ONI because it was the only organization with substantial knowledge of Japanese

language and culture.

At some point the organization became known as the Naval Intelligence Investigative Command (NIIS). In time, the investigative corps gained respect and a permanent place in the fabric of Naval security.

As the war concluded it was recognized that there was a need to maintain a base of professionalism, and provision was made to retain a small group of civilian agents. Wartime experience had demonstrated two points: more specific investigative authority was needed; and a truly effective organization demanded centralized control as well as direction.

The first point found its remedy in 1945 when Secretary of the Navy Forrestal extended ONI's charter to major criminal and security investigations, in addition to sabotage and espionage. The second point faced the resistance of tradition and was far more difficult to overcome.

Korea and the coming of the cold war (1950-1966)

The nucleus of civilian special agents that remained after demobilization were diffused among Naval Districts. The tendency among commands was again to view them as local assets, and management control from Washington was limited by resources and the generally low priority assigned investigative matters in the postwar period.

The coming of the cold war and various major espionage activities such as the Rosenberg and Alger Hiss cases and the outbreak of war in Korea, all contributed to increasing requests for background investigations throughout the Government. Demands on the Navy were as heavy as any other service, yet in the fall of 1950 the agent corps numbered only 156. Caseloads became heavy with currency measured in years instead of days. Exasperation at long delays finally forced a buildup of ONI's investigative resources.

Personal Security Investigations (PSI) were central to Navy's investigative effort well into the 1960s. Cross servicing of leads among the districts and overseas units asserted the commonality of purpose that extended across command lines.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s (when the organization was once more called ONI) approximately 500 agents conducted criminal investigations, counterintelligence and background investigations for the Navy. Considerable strides were made but it was not enough.

The arrangement of resources and priorities remained under the control of planners outside the operational arena, and despite several organizational re-shufflings, the investigative branch continued to fall farther and farther behind. By 1964 pending cases had grown to 35,000 which translated to a six and one-half month backlog for each agent.

As the result of a Department of Defense study, Secretary McNamara in 1964 directed that "...the commander of the Navy Investigative organization be the commander in fact as well as in name, having no primary responsibility other than managing the investigative organization."

Vietnam and the post-Vietnam period (1966 onwards)

On 4 February 1966 the name Naval Investigative Service (NIS) was adopted. Under the Director of Naval Intelligence, the new command consisted of only three functional organizations: the Director NIS and his headquarter staff; Naval Investigative Service Offices, each headed by a military commanding officer, and NIS Resident Agencies which were the basic operating components. The escalation of the Vietnam War and the heavier commitments that this brought about altered the course of the organization, and saw the inception of the Agent Afloat program which provided a NIS presence on all anti-aircraft carriers, deployed or in port. (It is difficult to realize that the first civilian Special Agent assigned to the Pacific, ca 1950, was given a geographic area of 80 million square miles. It is said that in the tradition of the Texas Rangers, "One riot--one Ranger", he handled the assignment with aplomb.)

Another major change occurred in 1972 when the Defense Investigative Service (DIS) was formed and assumed responsibility for conducting all security background investigations for employees of the Department of Defense. Although this allowed NIS to concentrate on criminal investigations and counterintelligence, it did not come without a price. One-half of NIS' Special Agents were transferred to the newly established DIS so that it could immediately begin to fulfill its mission.

For the next eight years the agent corps remained relatively constant at about 500 agents. After 1980 some major policy shifts occurred which resulted in a buildup of both the Department of Defense and the intelligence community.

In 1982 the NIS status within the Navy was upgraded to an Echelon II command, giving it control over its own annual budget and removing it from under the operation control of the Naval Intelligence Command. During the years 1982 through 1986 there was also a significant accretion of new responsibilities.

Rear Admiral Cathal L. ("Irish") Flynn (the first active duty SEAL to attain flag rank), was assigned as the first flag officer to command NIS in August 1985. In October of that year the agency's name was changed once again to the Naval Security and Investigative Command (NSIC). In 1986 the Special Agent corps increased to over 1,000 personnel.

On 8 September 1988, RADM John E. Gordon, the agency's second flag rank commander, directed that NCIS be redesignated as the Naval Investigative Service Command (NISCOM). RADM Gordon, a member of the Navy Judge Advocate General Corps (JAG) was the first of three JAG officers to command the organization.

Throughout most of its history the organization was commanded by a military officer, first a Navy Captain and eventually a Rear Admiral who reported to the Chief of Naval Operations. In the fall of 1992 that changed abruptly when NISCOM experienced a major restructuring ordered by the then Secretary of the Navy, Sean O'Keefe.

This major restructuring was brought about largely as a result of adverse publicity received by the agency as the result of an explosion aboard the USS IOWA in 1989 and the "Tailhook" scandal in Las Vegas in 1991. It is now generally accepted that the investigations conducted were not seriously flawed or deficient. The criticism resulted from: (1) misconceptions of the true, legal role of the organization; (2) the fact that the agency was not called on to investigate these incidents until long after the occurrences, and (3) certain senior Naval officers were reluctant to tarnish the Navy image by admitting to episodes of shipboard sabotage, sexual assault or even murder, and thus tried to blame the investigators (most of whom were civilians).

The results of this reorganization and change in structure were:

(1) The name was changed to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), in order to emphasize the organization's criminal investigative mission.

(2) The military leadership was replaced by the first civilian law enforcement director, Special Agent Roy D. Nedrow, formerly of the U. S. Secret Service; and NCIS was moved from under the operational control of the uniformed Navy leadership and placed directly under the Office of the Secretary of the Navy (another civilian).

(3) All military area commands were disestablished.

After his appointment on 28 December 1992, the new Director made several changes, including: disestablishing all regional offices; designating the sixteen major offices for worldwide operational control of all field activities reporting to NCIS headquarters; reducing the size of the agency about sixteen percent pursuant to Congressional mandates; and emphasizing the consistent pursuance of competent, professional, independent, felony criminal investigations. As of early 1996, NCIS had approximately 1,600 employees including 900 special agents in a worldwide network of 165 field offices, resident agencies and ships at sea.

NCIS agents pursue three major missions. Roughly thirteen percent of agents investigate procurement fraud. (This group was instrumental in the famous "Ill Wind" case, one of the widest ranging and most successful fraud investigations in recent history).

Another thirty-six percent of NCIS agents are involved in foreign counterintelligence, protecting ships and bases against terrorists and foreign agents and acting as liaison with law enforcement agencies in other countries.

The area to which NCIS devotes the bulk of its agents (forty- eight percent), and for which it is most widely known, is criminal investigation of Navy personnel. NCIS acts as the service's detective force in cases ranging from narcotics and theft to rape, murder and child abuse.

Though their main function is to investigate felony crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, NCIS agents also participate in other inquiries. They assist in investigations upon request of the Judge Advocate General Office and the Naval Inspector General. They cooperate with and assist other Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in matters of mutual or overlapping interest, or upon request.

Since World War II the great majority of the organizations' special agents have been civilians; other military investigative services have used military personnel primarily. The agency's investigators have been trained at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) at Glencoe, Georgia since 1984. This is the training facility for most other federal investigative agencies except the FBI.

In conclusion

The preceding pages have briefly traced the evolution of this organization, known by so many names, from its beginning in the 19th century as an information bureau; then, at the time of World War I, taking on additional duties of what might broadly be termed counterintelligence. Later, in the 1930s, with little or no specific legal authorization, a limited amount of criminal investigation was added.

World War II enormously increased the counterintelligence function (as well as others) and brought about additional legal authority and procedures that were more formal and better organized. The emphasis was still on counterintelligence as opposed to criminal investigations.

In 1945, ONI's charter was extended to include major criminal and security investigations, in addition to sabotage and espionage. Demobilization greatly reduced the ONI force but the emergence of the Cold War, the Korean War and the Vietnam era again enormously increased counterintelligence activities and the personal security investigation. Now, with formal legal authority, criminal investigation began to take a larger share of activity.

The establishment of the Defense Investigative Service (DIS) in 1972 removed background investigations from the (then) Naval Investigative Service, leaving it primarily a criminal investigative organization.

Another major restructuring and name change occurred in 1992. At that time the organization was effectively removed from control by the uniformed military service and placed under the directorship of a professional civilian law enforcement official who reports directly to the Office of the Secretary of the Navy. The name (as of 1997) is the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Rear Admiral Cecil H. Coggins, MC, USN.

Vast numbers of people have made important contributions to this organization. Most of them must remain anonymous because it is neither feasible nor ethical to select some and omit others. Nevertheless, there is one name that would surely receive unanimous agreement as being worthy of special mention--Cecil H. Coggins, MD. He was certainly one of the most colorful and outstanding personalities in the history of ONI.

A biographical article in an issue of the Naval Investigative Service Bulletin describes Coggins as "Physician...ONI agent...psychological warfare expert...and member of the 'Rice Paddy Navy', (Chinese guerrillas who fought the Japanese)...Rear Admiral Coggins was all of these." One of his more valuable contributions was the writing of the first training manual for personnel assigned to the investigative section of ONI

Cecil Henry Coggins was born in St. Louis on 10 April 1902, the son of an itinerant preacher from North Carolina and a school teacher from California. He had an identical twin brother, Cyril.

He embarked early on an adventurous life. At about age 19 he joined the Merchant Marine as an able-bodied seaman. He jumped ship in Salonika and found his way to the battlefront of the Greco-Turkish war which resulted in his brief incarceration as a suspected spy. A year later he was managing a banana plantation in Honduras.

Coggins returned to the U. S. and attended the University of Missouri and later the Jefferson Medical College, graduating as a Doctor of Medicine in 1930. That same year he began a distinguished career in the Navy as a Lieutenant (j. g.).

The young medical officer's interest and capacity in the fields of intelligence and counterintelligence emerged early and seem to have been initially instinctive and self taught. His abilities were subsequently honed through contacts with military and civilian intelligence and law enforcement organizations.

While assigned to Long Beach in the 1930s he became curious about the activities of Japanese fishing boats in the area and, with the help of local ham radio operators, initiated an informal surveillance of their radio transmissions. The results indicated that some of the boats were more interested in gathering

information than fish. He turned this information over to the Navy, expecting that it was already known; it was not and was greeted with surprise and dismay.

Coggins' activities continued with the unearthing of a spy ring made up of Japanese language students which resulted in the conviction of an American and the expulsion of his Japanese contacts. The young doctor began to be regarded as being useful outside the medical field. This marked the beginning of his long and successful, but largely secret, career in intelligence.

In March 1941 Coggins, then a Lieutenant, reported to Commander, Pacific Fleet in Honolulu Hawaii. Although he was supposed to be in charge of "health, recreation and welfare for all Navy personnel in the Hawaiian Islands", he was actually chief of counterespionage for Commander, Pacific Fleet.

Coggins was in Hawaii when Pearl Harbor was attacked and interrogated the commander of a Japanese two-man submarine when the vessel was stranded (after it had reconnoitered the U. S. fleet the night before). In his role as intelligence officer he interrogated Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki, Imperial Japanese Navy, and assured him that he would not be executed. (Sakamaki later became president of Toyota Motors.)

Subsequently Coggins was assigned to the USS SALT LAKE CITY for combat intelligence duty in the attack on Kwajelein Island and was promoted to Lieutenant Commander. He was later reassigned to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D. C. as Bacteriological Warfare Officer.

By October 1942 he was back in the intelligence business with an appointment as Chief of the Special Warfare Section of OPNAV where he organized what was then known as the Special or "W" Branch. This was an euphemism for psychological warfare, a term which was not well regarded in some circles. Possibly the best known campaign of this branch was the "Commander Norden" broadcasts. "Commander Norden" was the cover name for ONI's prisoner of war (POW) interrogator, CDR Ralph G. Albrecht. Using information obtained from German POWs, these broadcasts were designed to undermine the morale of German U-Boat crews by spreading gossip, rumors, scandals and news of losses. Other well known intelligence personnel who cooperated in this project were Ian Fleming and Ladislas Farrago.

In November 1943 Coggins was ordered to report to the U. S. Naval Observer, Chunking, China for duty as a physician with a Chinese guerrilla group. This group lived off the land and improvising was a way of life. It is reported that their jeeps sometimes ran on rice wine when gasoline was not available. Coggins carried out medical procedures, including emergency operations, under the most primitive conditions.

Based on his observations Coggins sent a request to the American government to provide mortar teams for the guerrillas. The request had an unexpected result; by coincidence, his twin brother Cyril was assigned to bring over mortar teams and train Chinese military in their use. The brothers met unexpectedly in a jungle deep in the interior of China. Neither brother knew the other was in that country.

In 1945 Coggins conducted the withdrawal of a medical unit and a missionary group from Changsha while it was under fire during an enemy attack. For this he later received the Bronze Star and a commendation.

After WW II ended Coggins returned to the United States and held a number of important medical assignments including, in 1949, Chief of Atomic, Biological and Chemical Warfare. He retired in 1959 with 31 years of service having attained the rank of Rear Admiral. One of his later occupations was Chief Medical Officer of the California Civil Defense Office from 1960 to 1967.

Subsequently he moved to Monterey, California where he pursued his hobbies of chess, psychotherapy, fishing and golf. Rear Admiral Coggins died at the age of 85 on 5 May 1987 and was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

During his life Rear Admiral Coggins accomplished much in the fields of medicine and intelligence, but these were not his only areas of achievement. He was a champion of Japanese-Americans at a time when such sentiments were unpopular.

In an article by Dr. Eugene Laforet, "Cecil Coggins and the War in the Shadows", the author says that while Coggins was chief of counterespionage for Commander, Pacific Fleet, "he was responsible for the selection and training of some 100 counterespionage agents, most of them Nisei--an experience he was later to draw on in arguing successfully for not only the disestablishment of the (WW II Japanese) relocation camps but also

for the formation of the Army's two Japanese-American units, the 200th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

"Fortified by his personal experience and...a concept of the meaning of America...Coggins was a potent but largely unseen force in the passage of an enabling act that restored their civil rights to many of his fellow Americans. This, even in the light of a uniquely distinguished career, might well be counted as his proudest accomplishment."

SPECIAL AGENT REMINISCENCES.

During the course of this project letters were sent to a large number of former special agents requesting information about their length of service, training, and recruitment. They were also asked to submit personal reminiscences about important or interesting cases during their careers. The names were taken from the membership list of the Association of Retired Naval Investigative Service Special Agents (ARNISSA).

Only a small number of responses were received. Those responding served for various lengths of time from the 1940s to about 1990. Most were civilian special agents but a few were military commanding officers or reserve officers. Most of the civilians started as contract agents and were later converted to Excepted Civil Service status. A few began in ONI/NIS and were later transferred to DIS. Most made their career in ONI/NIS, but two of the responses were from men who started with Navy and later became career agents with FBI or DEA.

A majority received six months to one year on-the-job training and later attended Special Agents Basic Course usually held in the Washington, D. C. area. Some received additional specialized courses in such subjects as polygraph operation, photography, clandestine listening devices, firearms and unarmed combat. A few of the respondents received only on-the-job training. (Since about 1984 new agents have been trained at FLETC, Glencoe, Georgia.)

A great many of the agents were officers in the Naval Reserve who were recruited by other officers or special agents. Several others served in different components of the intelligence community and so became aware of the organization.

Also common was a previous connection with some aspect of law enforcement. One agent had been a probation officer and another was the son of a senior deputy sheriff. A few were former police officers. As was said earlier, ONI/NIS was for many years probably the most anonymous federal investigative agency; its very existence was not widely known. One of the responding agents remarked that in the 1950s and 1960s any federal investigator who wore a suit and carried credentials was thought to be from the FBI. (Editor's note: While attending the special agent basic course we were told to deny twice that we were with the FBI but that any further denials were futile. That was true.)

There are common elements that occur in all of these reminiscences. All of those responding, however long or short their tenure, were proud of their service with the organization and consider that time to have been one of the best in their lives. By and large they recall most of their co-workers with respect and affection. There are, of course, a few exceptions.

Another emerging perspective is that of a small number of dedicated, loyal agents with impossibly heavy case-loads, low salaries, and little in the way of material support. Government automobiles were often old and had high mileage. Other equipment was sometimes not of recent vintage. Agents frequently used their own cars, also usually older, and a breakdown of these personal vehicles was a major crises. One former agent recalled that in certain DIOs agents were paid with what appeared to be a personal check drawn on the account of the commander--who was not identified as a Naval Officer.

Referring to an earlier section of this document we are reminded that in the 1950s and early 1960s there were only 500 agents world wide and that by 1964 pending cases had grown to 35,000. This translated to a six-and one-half month backlog for each agent. The situation improved somewhat in the 1970s.

Before the formation of DIS the majority of agents probably spent most of their time conducting background investigations along with the occasional investigation of sex offenses. But there was also a variety of criminal investigations including major and minor theft, fraud, murder, arson, assault, rape and cases of sabotage, espionage and subversion. A few of these cases and other reminiscences will be related herein.

Item No. 1. One of the earlier accounts is from an agent who served as a Yeoman in the New York City office during the early years of WW II. In an article published in the Naval Intelligence Professionals Quarterly he says, "New York City was an exciting place to be during the early stages of World War II if one was assigned to the Third Naval District Naval Intelligence Office." "It was a revelation for me to see Vincent Astor, Jock Whitney and men of that stature holed up in relatively small offices hard at work."

Item No. 2. A retired special agent reported two interesting cases from southern California, period not specified.

In the first case a private investigator hired by an attorney impersonated a Marine Corps Corporal, took up illegal residence at the Marine Corps Base at El Toro for three months and stole files from the legal office which he turned over to the attorney. The private investigator fled the area after stealing the files but was tracked down and arrested by the S/A in a restaurant where the suspect was working.

The S/A interrogated the suspect on the spot. "(The suspect) drew on a table cloth the layout of the base where he slept and ate. He wrote the names of his contacts on the base. He drew a diagram of the legal office including the location of the safe he robbed. The table cloth was purchased and retained as evidence.

"(The attorney) was charged with several federal crimes and was found guilty.... The table cloth was our best evidence and (the attorney) went to prison for several years."

The second case involved sabotage aboard an LST. The ship was getting under way to depart for the Far East when a terrible grinding noise was heard from the engine room. It was determined that three or four large wrenches had been thrown into the ship's bull gear which would delay operation of the vessel for many months at tremendous repair cost.

All hands would have had access to the gears and it was necessary to question each crew member. The commanding officer assigned a Lieutenant (j. g.) to assist the special agents in their inquiries. After a long investigation which involved interviewing all crew members a second time, it was determined that the Lieutenant (j.g.) who was the liaison officer was actually the perpetrator.

His motive for the sabotage was to stay with his new wife, of only a few days, while the ship was undergoing lengthy repairs. The officer was convicted and sentenced to a dishonorable discharge and five years in federal prison.

Item No. 3. A former agent reports that his first job as a new agent in Kodiak, Alaska was to assist in cutting down the body of a soldier who had hanged himself from the rafters of an empty warehouse. None of his subsequent assignments were quite as grisly. He was later reassigned to California and he relates an unusual case that occurred there in the 1950s.

While serving in DIO-12ND that office received a request from another DIO to retrieve an item of stolen government property--a turkey. The S/A states, "It seems that some enlisted men had broken into a Naval commissary storage area and helped themselves to several hams, steaks, etc., including turkeys.

"The guilty parties were identified and interrogated, and the disposition of the stolen items was determined. One suspect admitted that he had taken a turkey to San Francisco and given it to some longtime family friends.... When I (went) to the people's home, identified myself and told them of my purpose for being there they readily confirmed how they got their Thanksgiving turkey. The turkey was in the oven and ready for carving but, you guessed it! (I) retrieved the bird from the oven and stored it as evidence in (my) own personal freezer.

"(The originating) DIO never even requested the turkey as evidence and about a year later the bird was defrosted and fed to the neighbor's dog. The incident is always referred to in our group as (Name's) Great Turkey Caper."

This former S/A also tells of a recent sighting of a bumper sticker saying "IF THERE HADN'T BEEN A PEARL HARBOR, THERE NEVER WOULD HAVE BEEN A HIROSHIMA".

Item No. 4. This man describes the successful use of fluorescent powder and light to detect someone who had stolen personal property aboard a Navy ship. He also relates the story of the manager of a Navy Exchange who was suspected of stealing Exchange funds.

Investigation showed that the NEX Manager and his wife had opened a number of new bank accounts in the recent past. Investigators discovered that the Manager and his wife had found that when opening a new account some banks would award a special gift, such as a toaster, as an inducement to do business. The Manager was merely moving small amounts of money from one bank to another in order to obtain such gifts and nothing illegal was involved.

Item No. 5. An account of the successful investigation of a rape case was provided by the next respondent. The case occurred in Japan during the 1970s. The S/A's own story follows.

"Having drawn all my life which included portraits,

character sketching, cartoons, etc., I was able to put these efforts to good use.... I received a report...of the brutal rape of a U. S. Navy Nurse who had gotten a look at her assailant during the incident. I grabbed the Identikit and the first train to (the location) arriving a few hours later during which time the physical evidence had been gathered and a full investigation was underway.... During questioning, the victim...stated that the attack had taken place in her residence...and that her attacker had broken in during the dark of night and, after he had forcibly raped her, he opened the refrigerator door for something to drink casting light into the room. It was during that brief moment that she got a look at her assailant.

"With her detailed description of the man I was able to draw up a likeness of him utilizing the Identikit. Copies of the drawing were distributed to all commands in the area and to all the many ships in the harbor. Before the day was out the rapist was identified aboard one of the ships." The suspect later confessed.

Item No. 6. Another former S/A remembers his experiences in the Ninth Naval District during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In those days a new employee was called an "agent" for the first six months and carried temporary credentials; later he was promoted to "special agent" and received a grade raise. This man was first assigned to Chicago and upon his promotion to S/A was making all of \$80 per week which, he says, was about the salary of a good secretary in that city.

Later he was transferred to Twin Cities. "Road trips out of the Minneapolis Resident Agency extended out through North Dakota to the Montana line. I worked northwest Minnesota as a regular road trip, and we took turns going to North Dakota. Sometimes we went for two weeks to the North Dakota territory." "We drove those Nash Rambler cars, some of which were leased by the Navy from some leasing outfit."

"In March 1962, I remember that snow drifted over the roof of the motel I stayed at near Grand Forks, North Dakota." "On those road trips to North Dakota we often stayed at the Comstock Hotel in Fargo. The rooms were about \$3.00 if you were willing to go down the hall to the bath and shower.

"They had an all you can eat buffet which cost 50 cents-- yes, 50 cents. No seconds on meat, but all the jello, macaroni,

mashed potatoes, beans, bread, rice and pudding you wanted. And on \$12.00 per diem you had to be on the lookout for good deals like that."

Item No. 7. The next agent tells the story of a series of potentially dangerous fires at the Naval Training Station in San Diego which were set with the simple timing-device of a lighted cigarette inserted in a book of matches--sometimes attached to a plastic baggie containing gasoline. An AWOL sailor was soon developed as a suspect.

After giving the sailor a 'Miranda' warning the investigator congratulated him on his timing-device and asked him when he had set his first fire; it was at age seven. The suspect was then asked where he planned to set his next fire and he replied "This building in the air shaft over the CO's desk". He named an accomplice who also liked to set fires, who was apprehended.

The case was brought to a successful conclusion in a relatively short time but the agent points out, "As most investigators can attest...thanks for a job well done isn't always forthcoming from the ultimate 'consumer', the Commanding Officer requesting the investigation. The NTC CO curtly said to us, 'What took you guys so long?'."

Item No. 8. Another respondent tells of his experiences in Hawaii during the early 1960s. "The Honolulu office handled the entire Pacific Ocean areas including Australia, New Zealand and our installation at the South Pole. And we had only nine agents. Trips to Midway, Wake and the Marshall Islands were frequent. I recall riding Carriers before the Carrier program began. Admiral Cleary, CINCPACFLT, requested that an agent ride the USS RANGER on its shakedown cruise to Westpac. Two of us went for six weeks. As I understand, because of our success, ADM Cleary suggested that agents ride all carriers. With these nine agents we did background investigations as well as criminal, security and sabotage, espionage and subversion.

"One (case) in particular was at the request of the UN, to interview a former Marine Captain who might know of a certain atrocity. I traveled to Australia's northernmost point, Point Headland, flying in a German Fokker, where I expected to find him on his arrival from Singapore. He had arrived and departed for Perth some days before. At Perth the U.S. Counsel indicated that the person arrived and accepted a position with a mining company in the Great Australian Desert. The Counsel (arranged for me to

stay overnight) and would have a Land Rover ready for me early in the morning. The next day I drove 300 miles into the desert to an iron mine, found my man, took a deposition, and drove back to Perth. This was written up in All Hands magazine, about the ONI Agent who travelled 25,000 miles to find his man." We are also reminded that in those days there was no such thing as overtime or comp time.

Item No. 9. A retired S/A summarizes some interesting cases in which he was involved:

"1969 - Supervised and participated in a successful espionage investigation wherein our five man office kept the subject, a Naval officer, under continuous surveillance for six weeks which involved long hours, fast speeds, unique camera work, covert searches, etc. I recall the code name as 'Ice Cube'.

"1977 - Participated in a 44 hour bank robbery/hostage situation aboard USNB Subic Bay in a supervisory liaison capacity and as one of the hostage negotiators.

"1979 - Supervised and participated in the arson investigation involving the burning of NISRA, Jacksonville by three lesbian suspects. The three arsonists were identified, arrested, and tried in Federal Court. One received a seven year sentence, one a five year sentence and the third was given five years probation due to her cooperation and testimony against the other two.

"1980 to 1983 - Worked with New Zealand National Police intelligence officers and kept visiting U. S. commands apprised of anti-nuclear demonstrations being conducted against visiting U. S. warships in New Zealand."

Item No. 10. The next retired agent relates the story of a Seabee who was accused of raping the wife of another enlisted man. "(Another agent) and I were assigned the investigation and we established (that) sexual intercourse occurred but it was not rape. We (determined that) the wife was at a base club celebrating her birthday and then became partner to a 'one-night stand'. Very shortly after this night-out the wife learned that her husband was coming home and fearing she could be pregnant alleged rape.

"The story held tragedy for all parties but most importantly

a young sailor was not imprisoned for rape. I have always held this case as an example of what an investigator should work for--the truth."

Item No. 11. An S/A who was the one and only military investigator ever assigned to Hong Kong, from 1967 to 1972, relates some of his experiences there. After the Viet Nam war intensified many American troops were visiting Hong Kong for R&R (rest and rehabilitation) and the British government finally allowed a resident military investigator to be assigned.

Only criminal investigations concerning U. S. military personnel were permitted. "...any intelligence or CI work was forbidden. In addition I conducted some BIs, almost entirely on Hong Kong Chinese who went to the U. S. and then went into the U. S. Army.

"Since I was a one man operation with a limited budget I was compelled to utilize the Hong Kong nationals who served as drivers for the R&R Office as interpreters when I did those BIs, some of which were on quite remote parts of the New Territories or on some of the many islands of Hong Kong." He goes on to relate that because Hong Kong was a low-budget office, operating out of the Philippines Naval Command, office space and other amenities were at a premium. "I had no transportation provided and used the R&R van when it was available but primarily depended upon taxis, buses, ferries, shank's mare and occasional walla wallas."

Another problem developed with personal housing. "I was given an allowance for rent and utilities and it was quite adequate when we arrived there." "But by the time my three year lease ran out...prices of apartments had at least tripled. NIS...said they could not increase my housing allowance, even though an unmarried...secretary in the LEGAT's office received a higher allowance than I did with my wife and two children." Eventually the agent managed to take over the remainder of a long term lease held by the American Consul. "However, since they paid their leases a year in advance, that meant I had to come up with a year's rent all at once." The same S/A finally closed the Hong Kong office in 1972.

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EDITORIAL NOTES:

This document was compiled without access to any official sources or documents of the NCIS, the Navy Department or any other agency of the U. S. Government. All information herein has been drawn from unclassified published or unpublished articles, books and other documents. The accounts in the section called "Agent Reminiscences" were taken from letters sent by former Special Agents.

Inasmuch as none of the materials are original, (except for the "Biography and Research Guide" for LCDR T. B. M. Mason USN), it is not appropriate that the writer call himself "author". The more accurate title is "editor".

The NCIS headquarters staff conceived this project. The staff provided office space and considerable personal support for the Editor, including transportation in personal vehicles. Unfortunately it was not possible for the Editor, a former Special Agent, to obtain a security clearance for access to agency files. Therefore this history is, in every aspect, unofficial. It is also, necessarily, short.

Special thanks are due to Ron Benefield, Cole Hanner and Gary Comerford, former and present members of the headquarters staff, for their assistance. Also, thanks to the former S/As who responded to our request for reminiscences and memorabilia.

The sources used are listed in the "References" section, but special recognition must be given to the outstanding article by Albert F. Deahl in the Military Intelligence Magazine, (Winter 1976). It is an excellent history of the agency up until the 1970s. Several sections of the article are used almost ver batum. (It used to be said in certain technical occupations in which the Editor was formerly employed, "Don't reinvent the wheel".) Thanks very much, Mr. Deahl.

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EDITED BY H. PAUL MULLIS, 1997.

A FINAL NOTE: In his excellent article previously referenced, Albert Deahl makes the following profound statement:

"Techniques and protocols are now under challenge. Actions once applauded are now subject to

disapprobation. 'It may have been proper at one time' revisionists would argue, 'But even if it were legal you shouldn't have done it because it isn't proper now.'"