

Major General John Henry Russell Jr., USMC

MGEN Russell was born in Mare Island, California, on November 14, 1872. Son of distinguished Rear Admiral John Russell, his career began prestigiously when President Grover Cleveland appointed him to the United States Naval Academy. Following two years in the Navy, Russell transferred to the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant.

Russell's lengthy career included numerous stellar tours of duty; immediately following his appointment as officer and attendance at the School of Application, he taught a class of noncommissioned officers at the Marine Barracks in D.C., then joined USS Massachusetts, serving throughout the Spanish-American War. He next served in Guam, and was placed in charge of the School of Application for Officers before being stationed at several navy yards and commanding the Marine Detachment aboard USS Oregon. Two years later, Russell commanded a school for young officers in D.C., and transferred to the Marine Barracks in Honolulu, Hawaii. Following a brief tour in the Panama Canal Zone, he joined the Naval War College. His subsequent command of the Marine Detachment in Peking, China, tested him, as during this period the Chinese government transformed from empire to republic, resulting in disorders throughout the Peking region.

At this point, Russell, now a major, received the fateful assignment of serving in the Office of Naval Intelligence, where he served until 1917.

In 1882, Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt established ONI, setting its priorities as discovering foreign routes, rivers, or other bodies of water, examining overseas shipyards, military structures, and industrial plants, and reporting on the developments, technical and tactical, of foreign vessels.

With the imminent onset of World War I, Russell realized major changes in intelligence policy and capabilities were needed. Together with Lieutenant Commander Dudley Wright Knox, Russell reorganized ONI into four divisions:

Division A: Organization and Control of Agencies for Information Collection

Division B: Coding and Decoding

Division C: Collating All Information for Statistical Study

Division D: Dissemination and Archives

Russell's efficient new structure, combined with Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt's insistence to make domestic intelligence a top priority, resulted in ONI growing into a complete, well-rounded, aggressive agency, and the first federal agency in World War I to employ undercover agents.