- 1915 The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) was reorganized in anticipation of U.S. involvement in World War I. As a result, ONI assumed responsibility for investigating espionage and sabotage.
- 1966 The name Naval Investigative Service (NIS) was adopted to distinguish the organization from the rest of ONI.
- 1972 Background investigations were transferred from NIS to the newly formed Defense Investigative Service (DIS), allowing NIS to give more attention to criminal investigations and counterintelligence.
- 1982 NIS assumed responsibility for managing the Navy's Law Enforcement and Physical Security Program and the Navy's Information and Personnel Security Program. In an effort to emphasize the new security aspects of its mission, NIS changed its name to Naval Security and Investigative Command (NSIC).
- 1983 Two months after the October 1983 bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, the
 agency opened the Navy Antiterrorist Alert Center (ATAC). ATAC, a 24-hour-a-day
 operational intelligence center, issued indications and warnings on terrorist activity to
 Navy and Marine Corps commands.
- 1986 The Department of the Navy Central Adjudication Facility (DoN CAF) was
 established and placed under the agency, corresponding with the organization's new
 responsibility of adjudicating security clearances.
- 1988 The name of the organization was changed to Naval Investigative Service Command (NISCOM).
- 1989 DoN CAF became fully operational in June. It now maintains over 1.7 million automated records and over 500,000 clearances for the Department of the Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard.
- 1992 The name of the organization was changed to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). The first civilian director, Mr. Roy D. Nedrow, was appointed.
- 1994 NCIS was completely restructured as a Federal law enforcement agency with 14 field offices controlling field operations in 140 locations worldwide.
- 1995 The Cold Case Homicide Unit was established.
- 1997 Mr. David L. Brant was appointed Director of NCIS by Secretary of the Navy John Dalton in May 1997.
- 1999 NCIS and the Marine Corps Criminal Investigative Division (CID) sign a memorandum of understanding calling for an integration of Marine Corps CID into NCIS.
- 2000 Congress grants NCIS civilian special agents authority to execute warrants and make arrests.
- 2002 A growing appreciation of the changing threat facing the Department of the Navy
 in the 21st century, culminating with the terrorist bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen and

the attacks on September 11, 2001, led NCIS to transform the Antiterrorist Alert Center (ATAC) into the Multiple Threat Alert Center (MTAC) in 2002.