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NSA's First Contingency Operation

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(b) (3)-50 USC 403
(b) (3)-P.L. 86-36

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The proposed civilianization of the U.S. Naval Facility on [redacted] brings back memories of the contingency operation on [redacted] in the summer of 1958, which was, to the best of my knowledge, the first such NSA operation anywhere.



Among other things, the Plan called for processing for possible overseas assignment of some [redacted] civilian analysts, reporters, and intercept operators, and for firming-up the framework of such an operation with Agency and overseas personnel who would be involved.

And this is where I entered the picture. My job was to coordinate preliminary planning of the operation with U.S. and collaborating-agency personnel, whose assistance would be imperative to the success of it. As an ancillary duty, I was also to see what equipment and facilities were available at the sites that could be used for the operation, and what would be needed from the U.S.

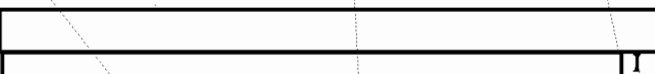
So on 20 June I found myself on [redacted] after a week's delay along the way [redacted] to coordinate the operation with senior U.S. [redacted] and headquarters personnel. While there, I also toured [redacted] operational areas that would be needed to assist in the operation.

After arriving [redacted] I discussed the proposed plan with U.S. [redacted] representatives [redacted] and visited the U.S. Consul to alert him to the proposed operation and to iron out any potential problems that might accompany the sudden appearance of a large group of Americans. He at first seemed reluctant to wholeheartedly endorse such an effort, perhaps envisioning all kinds of problems he might inherit when the Americans arrived, but later he seemed more receptive, and agreed, among other things, to assist us in arranging for adequate transportation.

The reception I received and subsequent discussions with persons [redacted] were excellent—and in particular in regard to [redacted] would become most deeply involved should the contingency operation become necessary. They indicated a strong willingness—and the ability—to expand operations in all pertinent areas in support of the Plan. Following these discussions, and after several days spent touring operational areas, I returned to NSA, briefing senior liaison officers on the way back. And at the same time that I was returning, four NSA civilian operator teams, which would later play a major role in the contingency operation itself, were headed in the opposite direction to [redacted]

On the whole, senior persons in the field and at NSA [redacted] seemed satisfied with the results of my trip, and I also thought it had gone quite well indeed, except for minor irritants that often accompany overseas trips, such as clearances that are late in arriving, unexpected travel delays enroute, and delinquent arrival messages.

After arriving back at NSA, I wrote the required trip report and discussed it and other matters with Agency managers and planners. The report detailed the number and skills of persons needed for the operation, requirements for equipment and supplies not available [redacted] and proposed changes in intercept coverage. Then I began a much-needed vacation, which, I quickly learned, would last one day.



[redacted] I was called back the next day, told to pack my bags and round up the equipment and people I needed, and get going. The contingency plan was operational. So on 20 July I was on my way back to [redacted] accompanied by [redacted] operators and [redacted] analysts and reporters ... and seven huge crates containing mills, headsets, paper, and various and sundry other items.

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(b) (3)-50 USC 403
(b) (3)-18 USC 798
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But this trip wouldn't go as smoothly as the first one. Contingency operations, by their very nature, call for quick implementation and an almost instant ascendancy to a high degree of operational effectiveness. Ours, unfortunately, was neither quickly implemented nor adequately staffed at the beginning. The major problem we encountered was that of transportation—from Washington to [redacted] and for the operators who were scattered throughout [redacted] on the previously mentioned hearability tests. The trip to [redacted] took almost four days, delayed by a host of totally unforeseen problems along the way, and it would have taken longer if not for the Naval Attache [redacted] who loaned us his plane and crew [redacted]. The next problem, [redacted] was triggered when the Consul, through no fault of his own, found it impossible to furnish adequate transportation. He did arrange for the loan of an old station wagon, and the [redacted] saw to it that the car kept running. He also arranged for transportation for the operators to and from work. Still another problem kept me busy for the first week—rounding up all the operators as they arrived in [redacted] and arranging transportation for them to their destinations. From that point on, my job was mainly that of project manager, handling such chores as arranging working schedules, solving additional transportation problems, shuffling billeting arrangements, and obtaining and keeping up to date special police permits to enable members of the team to get to work, as [redacted].

From an operational standpoint, though, the effort fared much better. The operators, once they got to [redacted] quickly assumed responsibility for their assigned tasks and worked their jobs in excellent fashion throughout the [redacted]. Analysts and reporters also quickly demonstrated their professional backgrounds, giving 100 percent effort throughout and adjusting quickly to unfamiliar conditions at the sites.

By the end of August the situation in the [redacted] [redacted] begin phasing out the contingency operation and the NSA civilians began to leave [redacted] [redacted] some heading home, others to assignments else-

where in the field. Late in September the last had departed, and I too left shortly thereafter, again accompanied by those seven huge crates. NSA's first contingency operation was over.

But what did it accomplish, and what did we learn from it? First, it taught us to be better prepared for any such future operations by insuring as far as possible in advance that fast and adequate transportation would be available to the final destination—and after getting there. Second, it showed that better methods would have to be devised to insure the ready availability of pools of NSA employees in certain skill areas. Medical shots and passports for these persons would also have to be kept constantly up to date. At last, it showed us that a scheme would have to be worked out with appropriate government departments, and in particular with State, whereby theater clearances for a specified number of NSA employees could be obtained as far as possible in advance of any such future operations. From an operational standpoint, it mainly taught us two things: (1) there is no substitute for highly skilled operators, linguists, analysts, and reporters in a crisis situation, and (2) NSA civilian employees could—and did—integrate smoothly and effectively into overseas field sites for contingency operations, whether those of the SCA's or collaborating agencies.

Nor is my tale quite complete yet. During the following year NSA made plans to put a [redacted] representative [redacted] so that contingency planning for that [redacted] area would be a continuous thing. So, in August 1959 I arrived [redacted] with my family for a 2-year tour as the NSA representative. But that, and the "car" my State Department friends loaned me for the contingency operation, are other stories.

Mr. Pattie, who holds three degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, began cryptologic work as a linguist in 1948 and has worked extensively, as a linguist and cryptanalyst, on [redacted] problems. He served as NSA Rep [redacted] and has held managerial and staff positions in operations and, most recently, in the National Cryptologic School.