

SECRET

file

8 April 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Status Report of Working Group on NSA TIPS Pilot Operation

1. This working group has been working steadily since October, 1965, and has had twelve meetings and has produced a second draft of a report, which is being carefully considered by the members of the Team. This working group has produced minutes written by an assistant within NSA to the Chairman. The whole tenor of the activity has been extremely pragmatic and machine oriented. The NSA group knows precisely what ought to be done and is trying its best to get this to be implemented in the inter-agency milieu. The system to be built has been dubbed COINS (Community On-Line Intelligence System). The original ground rules were that NSA would arrange to have remote consoles hooked to its computer from the various participating agencies. NSA quickly scrapped this proposed arrangement and stated that they would be willing to have other agencies' consoles only within the premises on NSA or could arrange to have other agencies' computers linked to their computer with the consoles of the respective agencies linked to that agency's computer. The second alternative was agreed upon after considerable discussion by the group and DIA agreed to



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2. The working group has worked assiduously with the assistance of many associated working sessions by related groups such as programmers, communications people, etc. Essentially all of the types and categories of files have been agreed upon. Data element standardization problems, file organization, formatting, and maintenance have been considered, the interrogation language strategies and formats have been settled, user languages were agreed to be locally determinable. The translation rates, standard communication codes, length of messages, etc., have all been agreed upon as well as the general security problems and the situation is now one essentially of constructing and writing the programs with minor additional meetings probably needed, establishing the communication lengths and commencing the testing of the programs.

3. It has been tentatively agreed that Phase I will commence in the winter of 1966 and proceed for approximately nine to fifteen

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months. DIA will provide the switch for this system. Phase II will commence sometime late in 1967 and will involve more files, more sophisticated techniques, multiple security level, and other new features which will be appropriate as learned from the Phase I test. CIA will provide the switch for Phase II.

4. It should be pointed out that the COINS experiment is not a true real-time on-line system. It is essentially based on magnetic tape stored files and typical time of access is in minutes, not seconds. However, it should also be recognized that there is a generalized curve one could construct plotting vs. access time cost per inquiry vs. file size and that the present state of the art in both hardware and software can not provide an economically feasible true real-time on-line inquiry system. Such systems are technically feasible (witness things like but are inconceivable within the framework of the present intelligence community operational and administrative philosophies. This does not mean, however, that development should not go forward on an appropriate testing of true on-line real-time system. It should be pointed out that with all due respect for the need for demonstration tests like COINS, the capability of this type of retrieval system by the agencies could have been demonstrated at a much lower cost in one of several existing systems with a lower classification within the intelligence community. Despite whatever success may be achieved by the mounting of the COINS operation, it is imperative that some interagency groups address itself to the the more monumental problem of the relative merits of the various types of "on-line system" which should be tested within the intelligence community. There should be a full time interagency group specifically assigned to this area to study the design, implementation and testing of systems in this area.

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