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Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State University Research Brief

John C. Stennis & the CIA

As a result of the recognition of a need for systematic intelligence collection for defensive objectives, the National Security Act of 1947 was passed, creating the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA would be the dominant force in American intelligence activity for the second half of the 20th century. This same year John Stennis was elected to the Senate in a special election. For most of his career, Stennis would serve on the committee charged with CIA oversight. In discussing the formation of the modern CIA, this brief will focus special attention on the influence of the Armed Services Committee and Senator John Stennis.

In the wake of World War II, an America which had once been isolationist chose to focus on its place in the modern world. Part of the change in policy and perspective was a result of the war itself; a portion was, no doubt, generated by the intrigue-interested leaders of the English-speaking Allies during the war, Churchill and Roosevelt. While Churchill and Roosevelt had worked with intrigue and spy missions which had meant a great deal to the success of Allied forces, the United States was not in a strong position for authorized intelligence collection. A short historical analysis is in order.

With the onset of World War II, the intelligence of the United States was conducted on an adhoc basis by various executive departments involved in foreign affairs. The Army, Navy, and State Department all had separate, uncoordinated intelligence efforts that typically overlapped and competed for resources. In June 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a presidential military order creating and mandating the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) "to collect and analyze strategic information required by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to conduct special operations not assigned to other agencies." The OSS collected and supplied information, facts, and estimates to the military to support their efforts. The OSS, serving as a counterpart to the United Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI-6) was a crucial part of the Allied defeat of the Axis powers in World War II. During the war, the OSS not only penetrated Germany with its operatives but, also purchased Soviet code information – an action which would become important later in the Cold War.

Following victory against Germany and Japan, the OSS was disbanded by President Harry Truman in September 1945. President Truman, unlike his predecessor, did not favor intrigue. The functions of the OSS were separated and placed under the control of the Departments of State and War. The State Department took over the Research and Analysis Branch and renamed it the Interim Research and Intelligence Service. The War Department reorganized the Secret Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Branches under the newly formed Strategic Services Unit. The Strategic Services Unit fundamentally became a clandestine operations unit.

In January 1947, with the realization that the Cold War was in full sway, President Truman ordered the creation of the Central Intelligence Group. The authority and assets of the Strategic Services Unit was transferred under the control of the Central Intelligence Group. In July of 1947, President Truman signed the National Security Act creating the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA essentially picked up where the OSS left off as the premier intelligence agency for the United States government; however, the CIA was given more authority than the OSS ever imagined.

**Forrestal impact on American naval history and intelligence cannot be underestimated;
his death remains riddled with intrigue.**

On July 26 1947, the National Security Act was signed into law and the US intelligence community began an extensive reorganization. Subsequent to the Senate Confirmation of Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal (the first Secretary of Defense – previously the cabinet position had been known as Secretary of War), the realignment began in earnest. The law essentially reorganized the military and established new elements to coordinate foreign policy and national security. The Act combined the Departments of War and the Navy into the National Military Establishment headed by the



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Secretary of Defense. Concomitantly, it created a separate Department of the Air Force out of the US Army Air Corps within the National Military Establishment. In 1949, the National Security Act Amendments were passed. These amendments renamed the National Military Establishment the Department of Defense, and placed the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force under the Secretary of Defense. Amendments to the National Security Act also changed the form of operation of the National Security Council. Currently, the National Security Council is an executive agency located within the Executive Office of the President. The permanent members of the National Security Council include the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor, the Director of National Intelligence (formerly the Director of Central Intelligence the President's Chief of Staff. Other high ranking officials are invited to attend and participate as agenda items require.

The effect of the National Security Act was to established the first peacetime intelligence agency in the US.. The Director of Central Intelligence had previously been established in January 1946, but with the creation of the CIA that office became the de-facto Director of the Central Intelligence Agency as well. Rear Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter took office as the first Director of Central Intelligence and the CIA in May 1947. The CIA was created as the central intelligence organization of the US intelligence community with its primary function as "collecting and analyzing information about foreign governments, corporations, and persons in order to advise public policymakers." In 1948, the National Security Council Directive Office of Special Projects gave the CIA the authority to conduct covert operations "against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and conducted that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons." In 1949, the Central Intelligence Agency Act gave the CIA the authority "to use confidential fiscal and administrative procedures, and exempting it from most of the usual limitations on the use of Federal funds" and exempted the Agency from disclosing its "organization, functions, officials, titles, salaries, or numbers of personnel employed." By 1950, the modern (and covert) CIA as we know it was beginning to take shape.

In 1951, John Stennis was appointed to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Stennis served on that committee as a member until 1969 when he became Chairman. He served as Chairman until 1981, when the Republican majority in the senate held possession of the Chair.

With the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency, Congress determined to establish oversight for CIA activities. Starting in 1947, Senate oversight was given to the Armed Services Committee and the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee. For the most part, information regarding the classified operations and activities of the CIA were limited to the Committee Chairmen, Ranking Minority Members, and some senior staff. In 1951, John Stennis was appointed to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Stennis served on that committee as a member until 1969 when he became Chairman. He served as Chairman until 1981, when the Republican majority in the senate held possession of the Chair. The Armed Services Committee's oversight of the CIA was similar in nature to its oversight of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The Committee reviewed, authorized, and investigated the operations and activities; however, it did not provide the permanent, continuing, day-to-day Congressional oversight of the US intelligence community that occurs today. Within the Armed Services Committee, a specific subcommittee was formed to oversee the CIA -- the Subcommittee on Central Intelligence. Stennis served on the Subcommittee on Central Intelligence and became subcommittee Chair in 1969. Papers from the Stennis Collection of the Mississippi State University Libraries Political and Congressional Research Center reflect that he function of the subcommittee was to "...hold such meetings and briefings as are necessary to maintain familiarity with the operations [of the CIA]...including the policies and programs being carried out pursuant to those duties..." and "...to provide a channel for liaison between the CIA and the Committee on Armed Services." Likewise, the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee was limited to reviewing the budgets and appropriations requested by the CIA. All was well in the 50s and early 60s and the agencies functioned with limited oversight as prescribed by the rule of law and federal regulation.

However, in response to the growing discontent with the Vietnam War, newspaper articles accusing agencies and agents of conducting illegal intelligence activities, and exposes revealing connections between ex-CIA operatives and the Watergate scandal, lax Congressional oversight came to a halt. The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, known informally as the Church Committee, a moniker reflecting the committee Chair, Senator Frank Church, was formed in 1975. The Church Committee began investigating the operations and activities of the CIA in much greater detail than had ever occurred before by a Senate Committee, and requiring (and receiving) more evidence of activities than had traditionally been available for congressional oversight. The Church Committee was succeeded by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 1976, the committee which formalized permanent and direct Congressional oversight of all CIA activities. In memoranda from the Majority and Minority leaders in the 1984, Senators are instructed that "...all Senator's (sic) are entitled to access to the classified information in possession of the Select Committee on Intelligence but they are prohibited from disclosing such information except in closed Senate session..." This action cemented the complete oversight of CIA activities to the extent that agents disclosed them, an issue that was raised during testimony relative to covert action in the Reagan Administration.

Currently, the Select Committee on Intelligence is dedicated to overseeing all agencies and activities of the US Intelligence Community. The Committee is chaired by John D Rockefeller IV and is made up of 15 members; the Senate Majority (Harry Reid) and Minority (Mitch McConnell) Leaders as well as the Armed Services Committee Chairman (Carl Levin) and Ranking Minority Member (John McCain) are ex-officio members.

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Due to the classified nature of the Central Intelligence Subcommittee, information about the proceedings of the subcommittee is limited, but within Stennis' Congressional papers there are memos, letters, and reports that can shed some light on the activities. Some of these documents reflect the following interesting accounts:

- In 1956, Stennis received a letter from then-Director of Central Intelligence Allan Dulles thanking him for his help in selecting the site for the new CIA headquarters. Accompanying this letter is the final report from the National Capital Planning Commission approving a site in Langley, Virginia for the CIA headquarters.
- In 1970, Stennis received a report from the CIA leadership outlining the guidelines for the National Intelligence Surveys. The Surveys analyze the assets and capabilities of foreign nations by reviewing and researching key components of their infrastructure.
- In 1974, John McClellan, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, requested from the Watergate Committee any and all documents and transcripts that might be related to CIA activity. Several of the men involved in the Watergate break-in were former CIA employees, so there was a suspicion that the CIA was somehow involved.
- In 1975, Stennis as Chair of the Central Intelligence Subcommittee received a document marked as 'Top Secret' from the Director of Central Intelligence William Colby and the CIA Legislative Director making budget requests for two special projects. The appropriations requests were for \$259.9 million for projects AZORIAN and MATADOR. Both projects were revolved around the building of the USNS Glomar Explorer, a US Navy barge specifically designed for the underwater recovery of debris on the sea floor from a Soviet submarine.
- In March 1975, Stennis received a request from Michael Harrington of the Foreign Affairs Committee for information from Senate hearings that may indicate CIA involvement in the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia in 1970. Sihanouk had taken a neutral stance on the war in neighboring Vietnam and allowed for the pro-communist Khmer Rouge to grow in Cambodia. The Nixon Administration offered economic and military aid to the Prime Minister and his allies in exchange for forming a Cambodian Republic and fighting the Khmer Rouge, which would aid the American effort to defeat the Viet Cong in Vietnam.
- In late 1975, Stennis received a letter from Director William Colby requesting that the Report on Assassinations being prepared by the Church Committee not be distributed to the public. Though Stennis was not involved with the Church Committee, Colby wanted his help in keeping any CIA involved assassination attempts on foreign citizens or leaders away from the public because of damage it may inflict on the Administration or the Agency. On the Senate floor in 1975, Stennis made a speech about erosion of the CIA and how ludicrous its treatment by the media had become. By the mid 1970s, the media had begun to continuously attack the CIA for its activities and the CIA leadership had scaled back the clandestine operations in favor of technological advancements.

After the creation of the CIA, there have been significant legislative actions taken, some of which were as a result of the actions of, among others, John C. Stennis. For example, the CIA Retirement Act provides for special retirement benefits for CIA personnel and also provides for the protection of their identities after their employment with the agency ends. Because of identity protection, few individual agents are known to anyone, often including family members. The Valerie Wilson scandal of earlier in the Bush Administration, brought the agent identity issue to the fore of the collective national consciousness.

In 1978, legislation was introduced into the Senate "...to improve the intelligence system of the United States by the establishment of a statutory basis for the national intelligence activities of the United States and for other purposes." When appearing before the Senate, "...the testimony of Central Intelligence Agency officials is in Executive Session...the transcripts of CIA witnesses are never published and are not kept by the Subcommittee but are returned to the CIA for custodial purposed between hearings...any information which appears in these transcripts is classified." The Senate made such rules so that CIA officials could inform Congress without jeopardizing operations or personnel.

Following the September 11th attacks, the entire US intelligence community was revamped. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 reformed the intelligence community by creating the office of the Director of National Intelligence. The Director of National Intelligence essentially takes the place of the Director of Central Intelligence as the head of the US intelligence community and coordinator between intelligence agencies. The Director of Central Intelligence serves exclusively as the head of the Central Intelligence Agency. The first Director of National Intelligence was former US Ambassador to Iraq and current Deputy

Secretary of State John Negroponte. Within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of Defense Intelligence also serves as the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.

Major legislative changes have been made since 2001 to redesign the intelligence community and make it better suited and more capable of addressing the threats that face America. These design changes have been built on the successes of the CIA and its major role, since 1947, in the intelligence community of the United States. Many of the CIA's successes were dependent on the service of Senator John Stennis of Mississippi on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and within the subcommittee charged with CIA oversight. Stennis' considerable influence on Congressional oversight of the CIA, and his strong stand on national defense, has contributed much to the security of America in the 21st Century.

About the Author

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Luke Fowler is a Graduate Assistant at the Mississippi State University Library and the John C. Stennis Institute of Government. As a Graduate Assistant, Luke conducts primary research into the congressional papers and political papers located at the Congressional and Political Research Center of the Mississippi State University Library and produces scholarly papers on specific topics related to the extensive career of Mississippi political figures. Luke holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Southern Mississippi, and is currently working on his M.A. in Political Science at Mississippi State University. He finished his undergraduate degree in two and one-half years, graduating from Southern Miss at 19 years old. At Mississippi State, he is receiving training in Geographical Information Systems in complement to his political education. As a member of the Stennis-Montgomery Association, Luke worked as a volunteer at the 2007 debates for both the Governor and the Commissioner of Agriculture. In addition to his scholastic activities, Luke is an alumnus of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, a certified SCUBA diver, and an avid participant in outdoor activities. Following graduation, Luke plans to continue his education at the doctoral level.

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Jeffrey Markham is a Research Associate III at the John C. Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State University and an Adjunct Instructor of History and Political Science at Itawamba Community College. As a Research Associate, Jeff provides human resources-related technical assistance to local governments throughout the State of Mississippi. Jeff personally developed the methodology for the annual Mississippi Municipal Compensation Survey and is responsible for its publication each year. Jeff holds a B.A. in History and an M.P.P.A. in Public Policy and Administration, both from Mississippi State University, where he is also a doctoral student, having completed all course work associated for a Ph.D. in Community College Leadership.

In addition, Jeff functions as the Coordinator of Civic Education at the Institute as well as the Institute's liaison to the Congressional & Political Research Center of the MSU Libraries. As the Institute's historiographer, he is committed to the accessibility of history and politics. He is also the editor of the Congressional and Political Research Center Brief as well as a contributing author.

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Lydia Quarles is a Senior Policy Analyst at the John C. Stennis Institute of Government, Mississippi State University. She received her Juris Doctorate in 1975 from Cumberland School of Law, Samford University, and her MA and BA from Mississippi University for Women, in 1972 and 1971 respectively, in political science and communication. After over a dozen years in the private practice of law in Alabama and Mississippi, she joined the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Commission as an Administrative Judge in 1993. Eight years later, in 2001, she was appointed Commissioner of the agency. In 2006, she resigned to join the Stennis Institute.

Quarles remains active in bar work, and currently chairs the Women in the Profession Committee, a standing committee of the Mississippi Bar. She also serves as co-chair of the Mississippi Supreme Court's "Gender Fairness Implementation Study Committee" and acts as the Chief Operating Officer of the Workers' Compensation Section of the Mississippi Bar. She is a fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation, a recipient of the Mississippi Bar's Distinguished Service Award, a member of the Mississippi School for Math and Science Foundation Board and a member of the MUW Alumni Board. Quarles was recently honored by the American Bar Association's Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice Section, receiving the Mary C. Lawton Award for lasting contributions to the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Commission in the areas of alternative dispute resolution and access for Hispanic workers. In 2004, Quarles was named one of Mississippi's 50 Leading Business Women by the Mississippi Business Journal; the Journal recognized her service to the State as a Commissioner as well as entrepreneurial skills developed in her property management business in Starkville, Spruill Property Management, LLC.

About the Institute



Elected to the United States Senate in 1947 with the promise to "plow a straight furrow to the end of the row," John C. Stennis recognized the need for an organization to assist governments with a wide range of issues and to better equip citizens to participate in the political process. In 1976, Senator Stennis set the mission parameters and ushered in the development of a policy research and assistance institute which was to bear his name as an acknowledgment of his service to the people of Mississippi.

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