

Security—Is it Worth the Bothers?

THOSE of us who handle documents bearing a security classification no doubt have asked ourselves whether security is worth the bother.

Every day before going to dinner or before leaving the office for the day, we deliberately clear our desks of classified material, locking it away carefully in a steel cabinet or safe. We then check our wastepaper baskets to make sure they contain no notes, drafts, or carbons which could have a security classification.

Or do we?

Perhaps we are in a hurry to leave. Perhaps the noon hour seems too short as it is! Perhaps we think that this security business is a bit over done anyway! Why, much of the stuff we handle and which bears a security classification we can read in the newspapers!

Surely the security people do not consider a locked filing cabinet a safe place for classified documents! Anyone really wanting to could break it open!

The arguments all sound quite logical—but are they?

Two Categories

Enemy agents may be divided into two categories: those who are members of an organized espionage ring—with the task of obtaining specific information of a top secret or secret nature—and those charged with the collection of casual information—that is, information which in itself may not be highly classified, but which, when collated with information from other sources, will supply the enemy with facts from which he may deduce intelligence of far-reaching importance.

The task of countering the activities

of an organized espionage ring belongs to the various civil and military security or counterintelligence organizations, and may be called "detective security." The efficient countering of casual collection of information by enemy agents is the responsibility of every individual who has access to classified information, and may be called "protective security."

Nevertheless, a high standard of protective security by individuals and departments handling classified information is the first requirement, if detective security is to be effective. The more attention paid to the protection of classified information the harder is the task of the enemy agent in securing or collecting such information, and he may be forced into taking risks, which will lead to his "discovery" by detective security measures.

Espionage Ring

In order to secure a particular item of highly classified information, the espionage ring must first learn of the existence of such a document, and if it is in the top secret category the knowledge of its existence should be the right of only a select few. The next task is to "infiltrate" the select few, with the aim of learning who is responsible for the document; who has access to it; who typed it; and, if it is in a safe, who has the key or knows the combination. Having ascertained this information, the next step is to study the habits and background of those who have access to the document or who are responsible for its custody. When do they leave their offices unattended? Have they ever been members of subversive undercover organizations, such as certain youth movements or peace and pacifist bodies? If they have, they will be considered as possible targets for subversion. Are they in financial difficulties? If so, they may be open to bribery.

And so it goes on! Considerably detailed

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and patient research which will take time and money must be undertaken—and all with the aim of borrowing, stealing, viewing, or photographing the documents concerned.

Casual Agents

How do the casual agents operate—the persons who are not seeking specific knowledge, but who are trained to take advantage of any opportunity to collect classified information?

These agents require less organizing, and will be a constant source of information if protective security is weak or nonexistent. They may be members of the office staff, typists, messengers, janitors, watchmen, or mess employees—in fact, anyone who has ready access to an establishment where classified information is held.

Three Questions

As a casual enemy agent, you would probably ask yourself three questions:

1. What type of information is required?
2. Where is this information to be found?
3. How am I going to get it?

Let us examine probable answers to these questions!

First Answer

During peace, the type of information that a future enemy will require is that which will assist him most during the early stages of a war. As far as the Army is concerned, such information might include details of operational and administrative plans to be put into effect at the outbreak of war; details concerning developments and improvements in arms and equipment; details of the organization of certain special units to be raised in war; strategic supply information; military aspects of pacts with foreign powers; and proposed and current activities of certain intelligence agencies.

Second Answer

Where is the information to be found? The best way to get a general answer to this question is to consult the telephone directory of the headquarters concerned—

a document which, from a practical point of view, cannot be classified above "restricted." However, even when the general potential source of information has been discovered, the agent would still be ignorant concerning the locations of the actual containers (safes and cabinets) of the information in which he is interested. Still, he has found out in which offices he is most likely to gain casual access.

Third Answer

Now how is he going to get it? The essence of the work of a casual agent is to avoid arousing suspicion, and consequently he is not generally prepared to adopt burglar-like methods to obtain his information. If office doors or cabinets are forced open, then this will probably be discovered in the near future and steps can be taken to change any plans which may have been compromised by his inspection of the document, and he is not likely to get additional information from the same methods.

Consequently, he will adopt less noticeable methods—the use of skeleton keys to inspect office desks during the noon hour and during morning or afternoon breaks; the examination of wastepaper baskets for classified waste (drafts, carbons, and notes); the exploitation of carelessness by the staff, where office doors or cabinets are not locked or where the key to a locked cabinet is left lying in an unlocked desk drawer; by visiting the occupant of an office and scrutinizing or secretly photographing documents on the desk when the user is called out of the room for a moment; and by listening-in to the telephone in the hope of hearing information over crossed lines. These methods are easy, and from an examination of history, it has been found that they bring excellent results. If we examine them in detail, it will be found that they are easily countered by the individual who is security conscious.

Are these methods being employed in Australia today? There is good reason to believe that they are, and they are certainly being employed in countries which will be our allies should another world war occur.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What classified information do I handle or am I responsible for?

2. How many ways could this information be obtained from me by an enemy agent?

3. How can I ensure that none of these methods is used to get this information from me?

Security is as strong as its weakest link, and if that weak link is an individual, then that individual, either consciously or unwittingly, is betraying his country's secrets to the enemy. Be sure you are not a weak link in the nation's security—you will be if you regard security precautions as not worth the bother.

