

The Handy-Dandy Field Site History: Fifty Years of Field Operations, 1945-1995

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

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August 1995 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. It also marks the beginning of modern cryptologic field site operations. Now is a convenient time to look back on fifty years of postwar geographic dispersal.

When World War II came to an end, Army and Navy cryptologists were spread out across the globe in small, mobile organizations supporting fighting forces. They had a few fixed sites, most of them in the United States, but the great bulk of their resources was in the mobile units.

Most of them went back to civilian life and by 1947 the Army and Navy had only a small residue of mobile teams. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] When the Air Force cryptologic organization, USAF Security Service, was created in 1948, it inherited three mobile Army Security Agency units but no fixed field sites. This is how the cryptologic business looked when, in 1948, the "Cold War" broke out.

When the Armed Forces Security Agency (the first American attempt at centralized cryptologic management) was formed in 1949, one of the first orders of business was to write a master plan for the expansion of field sites. This task was spurred by the outbreak of war in Korea the following year, and the early 1950s were characterized by the almost breathtaking expansion of SIGINT field sites. By the end of the Korean War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had endorsed a plan establishing the final level of collection positions at [REDACTED]

The "era of expansion" (1948 through 1957; see chart 1) had several unique characteristics:

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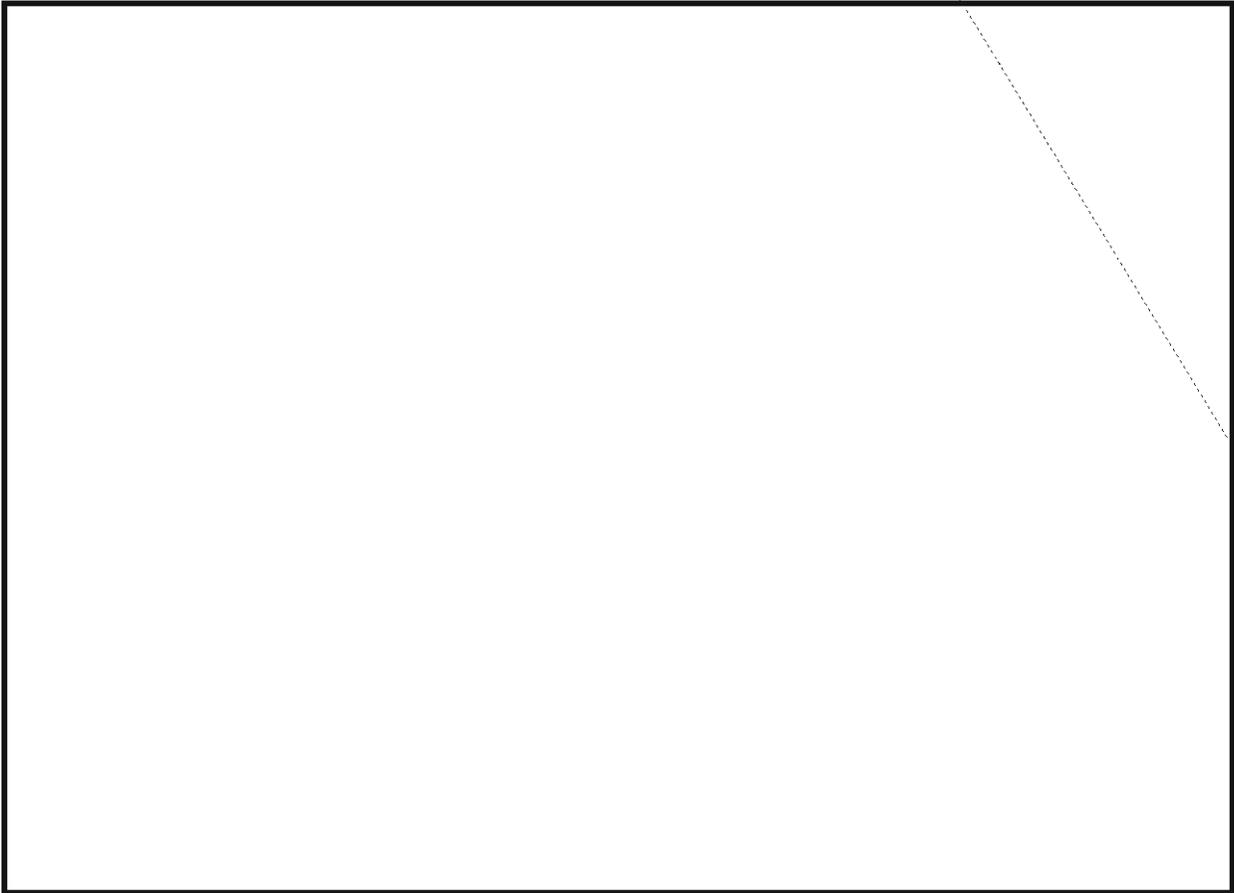


Chart 1

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1. This was the "Golden Age of HF." The principal targets communicated mainly in high frequency communications, although above HF was gradually coming into use.

2. The primary target was the Soviet Union. Others (Communist China, North Korea,

The heady expansion years of the first decade peaked in the late Eisenhower administration. The austere military budgets of 1958-1960 resulted in a small decline in the number of field sites, but the conflict in Southeast Asia brought this to an end. Site

ordered by a series of committees from 1958 through 1965, did not lead to an overall reduction in field site resources. The extra resources were simply transferred to Southeast Asia to support the Vietnam conflict.

As American troops left Southeast Asia beginning in 1969, the SIGINT business began

The invasion, and the Iranian hostage crisis, forced President Jimmy Carter to focus increasingly on national security issues, and Reagan continued and accelerated the buildup of defense resources.

The Reagan buildup did not lead to an overall increase in SIGINT field sites. The number stayed virtually stationary, even while the budgetary increases brought increasing sophistication to the field sites. It was the same set of field sites with more expensive toys. Overhead and COMSAT collection were high-ticket items, and the sites that had collection assets in those areas underwent expansion. Classical HF sites did not grow.

The end of the Cold War, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breakup of the Soviet Union following the 1991 coup,

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field site system as cryptologists came to know it has become a thing of the past.

Chart Two tracks the field sites from 1945 through 1994. They are organized by service, with Army first, then Navy, then Air Force, and finally units which do not fit neatly into any of the three "service" categories. (NSA field sites are in this group.) Within service, the units are listed by SIGINT Address (Sigad) in ascending order. Each Sigad is followed by a location, but locations are not necessarily grouped together. For instance, 

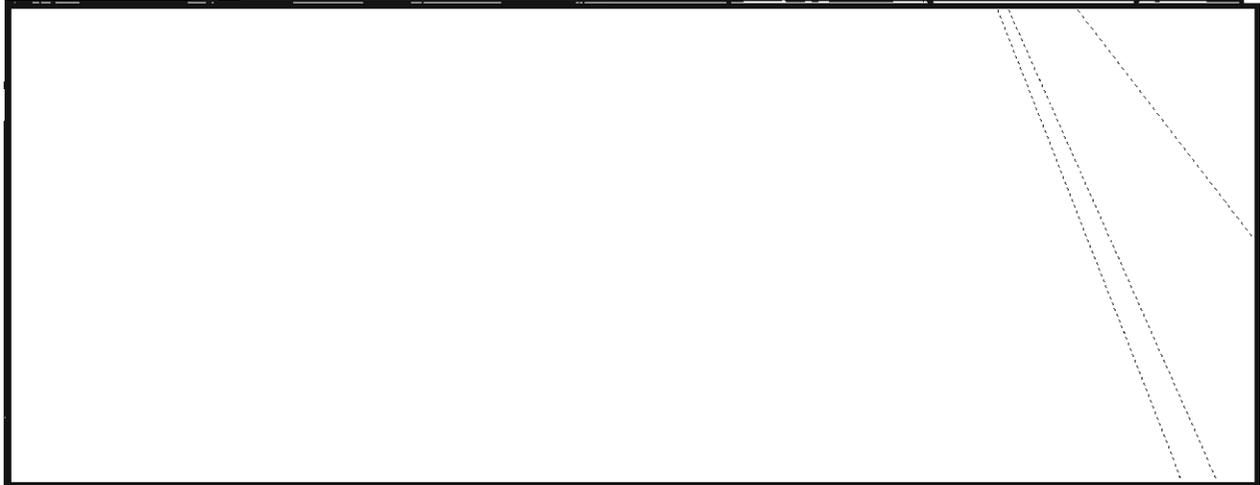

This recap of cryptologic field sites since 1945 is a follow-on to an article published in *Cryptolog* for January-February 1977 by . It traces the ebb and flow of U.S. field sites since World War II, based on (it is hoped) more complete information, updated through 1994.  time period ended in 1976.) It is based on different criteria, however. Specifically, it includes only those sites that were assigned a COMINT mission (or, since 1958, an ELINT mission) and steers clear of headquarters-only sites (those that had only an administrative function, as opposed to collection, processing, and reporting).  NSA/CSS Representative locations also do not appear.  COMSEC-only sites have not been included, and purely tactical organizations have also been placed outside the sphere. (However, precisely what constitutes a "tactical" unit versus a "fixed site" has been rather murky at times, especially in the early years. And in war zones like Korea and Vietnam, everything could be, but was not, considered "tactical.") Beginning and end dates for units depend on complex factors, and the mists of time have obscured, in many cases, information about when a unit actually began or ended its operational mission (as opposed to orderly room functions). No two cryptologic veterans would ever agree on a final listing, and each would be able to produce evidence substantiating his or her case.

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Army Sites



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USM-83 St. Lawrence Is., AI	56-57				
[Redacted]					
USM-604 Pleiku/Nha Trang, RVN	66-72				
USM-626 Saigon, RVN	61-73				
YEAR	19 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4
	45 50	60	70	80	90

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Army Sites

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USM-1 Vint Hill, Va.	45-79	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
USM-2 Petaluma, Ca. Kunia, Hi.	45-71	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	80-94	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]							
USM-5 Helemano, Hi.	45-58	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
USM-6 Homestead, Fla. Key West, Fla.	47-60	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	62-80	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	81-93
USM-7 Fairbanks, Al. Kapa, Al.	45-53	[REDACTED]	54-59	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]							
YEAR	19 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	19 1 2 3 4
	45	50	60	70	80	90	

Handwritten Government Classification Markings

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Army Sites

[Redacted]											
USM-808 Da Nang, RVN Phu Bai, RVN			62 [Redacted] 72 [Redacted]			63-71			[Redacted]		

Navy Sites

[Redacted]											
USN-13 Adak, Al.			45-94 [Redacted]			[Redacted]			[Redacted]		

[Redacted]											
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USN-18 Dupont, S.C.			45-54 [Redacted]			[Redacted]			[Redacted]		
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[Redacted]											
USN-21 Skaggs Is., Ca.			49-55 [Redacted]			[Redacted]			[Redacted]		

YEAR 19 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4
45 50 60 70 80 90

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HANDY-DANDY FIELD SITE HISTORY

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Navy Sites

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		1945												1950												1955												1960												1965												1970												1975												1980												1985												1990											
YEAR		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12												
USN-22	Cheltenham Md.	45-70	[REDACTED]																																																																																																																						
USN-26	San Fran., Ca. Skaggs Is., Ca.	45-55	56-93	[REDACTED]																																																																																																																					
USN-28	Northeast Cape, Al.	55-57	[REDACTED]																																																																																																																						

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Navy Sites

USN-838 Homestead, Fl.	(67-92)	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
USN-842 Udorn, Thai.	(73-75)	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
USN-843 Da Nang, RVN Subic Bay, P.I.	(70)	[Redacted]	(73-76)	[Redacted]
[Redacted]				

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Air Force Sites

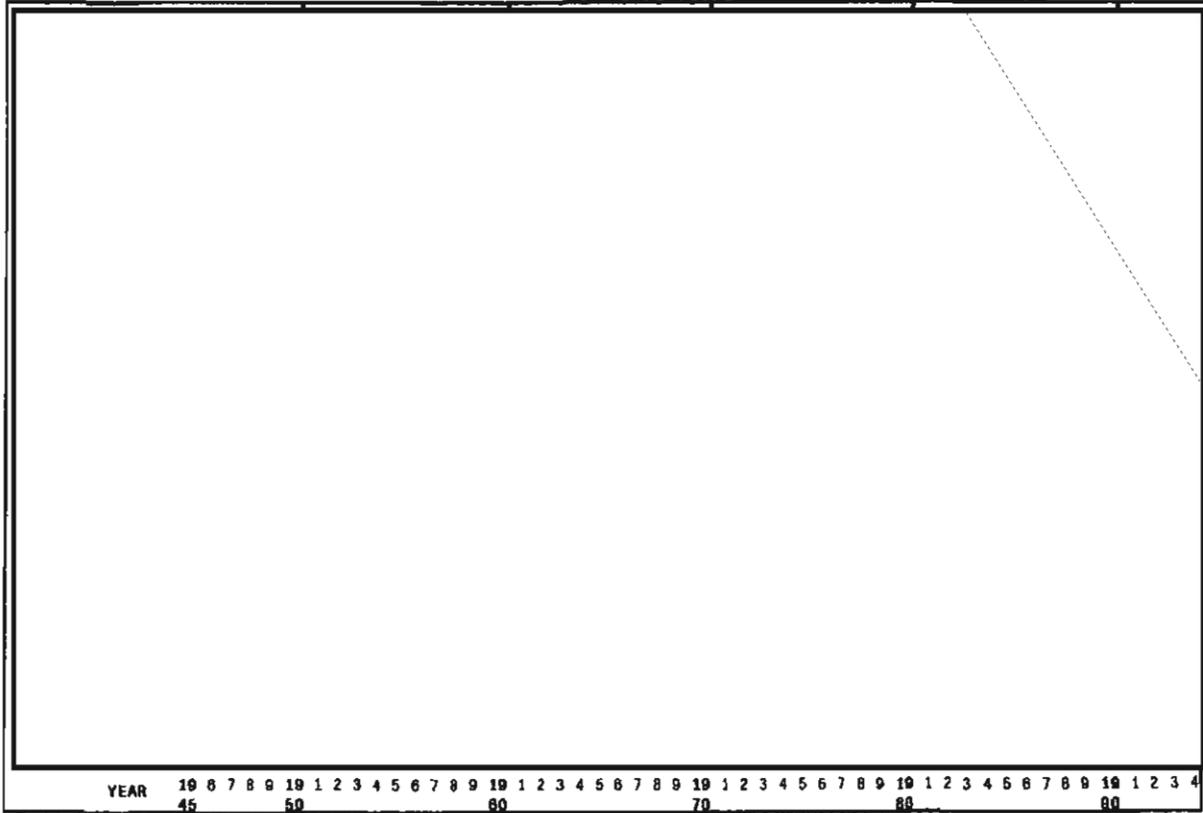
USN-864 San Antonio, Tx.	(65-73)	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
USA-28 Northeast Cape, Al.	(53-67)	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
USA-29 Naknek, Al. Udorn, Thai.	(51-55)	[Redacted]	(67-75)	[Redacted]
[Redacted]				
USA-32 Da Nang, RVN Kunia, Hi.	(62-73)	[Redacted]	(80-94)	[Redacted]

YEAR 19 8 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19 1 2 3 4

45 60 60 70 80 90

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Air Force Sites



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~~(FOUO)~~ Mr. Johnson is a senior historian and chief of research and writing with the Center for Cryptologic History. He has had over thirty years of experience in SIGINT, primarily in operational assignments. He began his service with the Air Force in 1964 and from then until his retirement in 1985 served in a variety of SIGINT assignments around the world. Since joining NSA in 1985, he has served alternately as a historian and in operational and foreign relations jobs. He earned a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Maryland in 1975. He has taught history at Pennsylvania State University, University of Maryland, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Mr. Johnson is a prior contributor to

Cryptologic Quarterly and has also published historical articles in academic journals. He is a certified Collection Officer.