

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**(U) CRYPTOLOGIC ALMANAC****(U) Vint Hill Farms Station: 1942-1945 (USM-1)**

(U) About forty-five years ago, when I was a dewy-cheeked newbie, a bus took a group of us to Vint Hill Farms Station for our first look at a real live intercept station. What memories do I have of that trip? Well...it was a nice ride, and the food was good.

(U) The farm was first referred to as "Vint Hill" in 1803. Changing hands several times in the ensuing decades, it was purchased by the Department of the Army in 1942 for \$127,500. The Army intended it to be a quiet and secure place near Arlington Hall Station, the headquarters of the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS), which was later redesignated as the Signal Security Agency (SSA).

(U) When the first soldiers of the 2nd Signal Service Battalion arrived at the farm in June, 1942, they established the Army's first large field station in the barn, known simply as "Monitoring Station No. 1." Throughout World War II, Vint Hill was one of the country's most important intelligence gathering assets as well as a signal school, signal training center, and refitting station for selected signal units returning from combat prior to further overseas deployment. There was a major expansion in military construction, particularly quarters, during and following the Korean conflict.

(U) Prior to the activation of the station, all work had been done by small mobile detachments attached to various areas throughout the country. The advantage of creating this station was that several of these units could be consolidated into one large organization. The first unit was from Mt. Hunt, VA, which set up shop on the first floor of the main house, with tents outside as temporary living quarters. The Ft. Hancock, NJ, group arrived on 8 July 1942, and set up on the sun porch of the same building.

(U) The activation of the first school unit occurred in July. The purpose of the school was to train both officers and enlisted men for specialized work at the station. On 5 October, 43 officers and 239 enlisted men were transferred to Vint Hill from Ft. Monmouth, NJ, and were attached to Company "A." The primary mission of this company was to provide quarters, rations, and administrative support to the personnel of the post. The company set up business in several old prefab buildings that had been moved in from a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. At the time of transfer, ground had not been broken for the construction of the school building, and there was not enough barracks space to house the men. Classroom space was also inadequate so students studied in shifts.

(U) Also in October, one WAAC officer and sixteen enlisted women were transferred from Arlington Hall to form the first WAAC section at Vint Hill. Since no quarters were available, they were initially billeted in the nurses' quarters at the station hospital and were attached to Company "A." The

women's barracks were completed on 28 October for these women and another 145 who arrived from Camp Crowder, MO.

(U) The eventual increase in personnel resulted in the activation of student companies B, C, D, E, and a headquarters detachment. On 6 December 1942, Company "C" was activated with 512 enlisted men, most of whom were transferred from reception centers in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. A week later, 150 limited service draftees were added to the company. With the few facilities that were available, the commanding officer initiated a basic training program. The men were divided into groups of about 50 men, each with an officer in charge. Up to May 1943, the training emphasized marches, physical training, and close and extended order drills. There were several 25-mile marches with full field packs and several night bivouacs at Thoroughfare Gap.

(U) During the first four months of 1943, students attended classes thirteen days every two weeks. The student body was divided into two shifts. Sunday classes were scheduled from 0800 to 1645, and each shift attended on alternate Sundays. The training of officers in cryptanalysis took place at Ft. Monmouth, NJ, until October 1942, when it was transferred to Vint Hill Farms. The officers were trained as Message Center Officer, Cryptanalysis; Cryptanalytic Officer, General; Cryptanalytic Officer, Translator; Cryptanalytic Officer, Traffic Analysis; and, after January 1944, Cryptographic Equipment Maintenance and Repair Officer. All officers selected had to be college graduates and, since almost all positions to which these officers would be assigned were in overseas units or installations, composed of or operated by white troops, all had to be "of the white race." In July 1944, a special group of twenty-four enlisted women were enrolled to be trained as Cryptanalysis Technicians for eventual overseas assignment. Of the twenty-four, twenty completed the course and were graduated in September.

(U) From 1943 on special courses were taught in addition to the normal curriculum. In 1943 the school trained 2,299 enlisted personnel in sixty-four specialties, and 230 officers in nine specialties. All training was based on definite theater demands, and all graduates were transferred upon completion of their training, about fifty per cent of them to ports of embarkation. In 1943 and 1944 a lot of this special training had to be performed to supply men for special units which were to go to Colonel Bicher, the director of DIS, ETOUSA (Defense Intelligence Service, European Theater of Operations, USA). Among the specialized courses taught was the Advanced Systems course which was established in October-November 1943. This was a two-week, 96-hour course for officers which included military geography, paraphrasing, operation of the SIGABA cryptodevice, operation of the M-209 cryptodevice, strip systems, double transposition systems, and codes. The SIGABA training was of particular importance, inasmuch as the SIGABA was the primary cryptodevice used by the U.S. armed forces. Since the school had only four SIGABAs, it was necessary to operate the course on an 18-hour schedule so the officers could have a sufficient amount of time on the operation of the machine.

(U) The 2nd Signal Service Battalion was transferred from the control of the Signal Corps and Army Ground Forces to the Army Security Agency (ASA) in November 1945. In January 1946 the School was reorganized and designated "Vint Hill Farms School." In October this was changed to "Army Security Agency School." The school remained at Vint Hill until March 1949, when it was transferred to Carlisle Barracks, PA.

(U) "B" Company was redesignated First Detachment, 2nd Signal Service Battalion, in early 1946,. This remained in effect until 15 May 1950, when it was again redesignated, this time to Field Station, 8601st Administration Area Unit (AAU), later redesignated 1st USASA Field Station in January 1957. In the late '60s, the 370th ASA Operations Company began a wideband intercept operation, designated USM-801, and in 1979 the 370th was replaced by the 166th Military Intelligence Company. The station was finally closed in November 1995.

Sources:

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