



OPERATIONAL SELECTION POLICY OSP8

THE SECURITY SERVICE

(THE SECRET SERVICE BUREAU: 1909-1916
MI5: 1916-1931
THE SECURITY SERVICE: 1931-)

Revised November 2005

1 Authority

- 1.1 The National Archives' Acquisition Policy statement announced the Archives' intention of developing, in consultation with departments, Operational Selection Policies across government. These Policies would apply the collection themes described in the Policy to the records of individual departments and agencies.
- 1.2 This Operational Selection Policy has been written following work conducted by the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Council on Public Records at the invitation of the Home Secretary in 1998. A public consultation exercise was undertaken during this work, and therefore no separate public consultation has taken place during the preparation of this Operational Selection Policy. The Security Service's current selection criteria below incorporate recommendations made by the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Council and accepted by the Home Secretary and the Director General of the Security Service.
- 1.3 Operational Selection Policies are intended to be working tools for those involved in the selection of public records. This policy may, therefore, be reviewed and revised in the light of the Security Service's experience of using the policy, or as a result of newly discovered information. There is no formal cycle of review but we would welcome comments at any time. The extent of any review and revision exercise will be determined according to the nature of the comments received.
- 1.4 If you have any comments upon this policy, please e-mail records-management@nationalarchives.gov.uk or write to:

Acquisition and Disposition Policy Manager
Records Management Department
The National Archives
Kew
Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4DU

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy forms the first part of a suite of Operational Selection Policies to be written on the operations of the intelligence and security agencies of the United Kingdom. It should be read alongside the forthcoming general Intelligence and Security Operational Selection Policy.
- 2.2 This policy relates to the records produced by the Security Service and its predecessors in operations in the United Kingdom and

overseas. It covers records in all formats, including paper, photographic, microfilm and electronic records.

- 2.3 This Operational Selection Policy provides guidance on the identification of records for permanent preservation. It does not provide guidance on access to records selected thereby.

3 **Responsibilities of the Security Service and its predecessors**

- 3.1 **The Secret Service Bureau.** In 1909, the Committee of Imperial Defence reported to the Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, on the dangers to British naval ports from German espionage. Following the Committee's recommendations the Secret Service Bureau was set up in October 1909 under Captain Mansfield Cumming of the Royal Navy and Captain Vernon Kell of the South Staffordshire Regiment. It reported initially to the Committee. Kell and Cumming divided their work into home and overseas activities, with Kell taking responsibility for counter-espionage within the British Isles. Working as a secret organisation, the Bureau's responsibility was to defend the Services and the United Kingdom against the attempts of the German Secret Service to obtain intelligence. Funding was from the secret service vote by the War Office, and formal accounts were submitted to the Foreign Office. Following the outbreak of the First World War the Bureau was mobilised as a section of MO 5 of the Directorate of Military Operations in the War Office. The duties of Kell's sections of MO 5 were defined in August 1914. It covered counter-espionage in the United Kingdom, military policy in connection with civil populations including aliens (passenger traffic to and from the United Kingdom, military permits, employment in sensitive areas and so on) and administration of the Defence of the Realm Regulations in so far as they concerned the Directorate. The Directorate of Military Intelligence was formed in the War Office in December 1915, and in January 1916 the sections of MO 5 under Kell dealing with counter-espionage became MI5.

- 3.2 **MI5.** MI5 continued to discharge the functions of the Bureau under MO 5. MI5 co-ordinated government policy regarding vetting and security measures at munitions factories. In September 1916 the responsibility to co-ordinate counter-espionage throughout the British Empire was added. From April 1917, responsibility for vetting of aliens employed at munitions works passed to MI5 from the Ministry of Munitions. After the end of the First World War military control on home ports ceased (1919) and in the same year responsibility for overseas missions passed to MI1. Following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in October 1917, MI5 began to pay attention to threats posed by possible Communist subversion in the armed forces, and sabotage to military installations. From the end of the war until Hitler's rise to power in Germany (1933), MI5's responsibilities were chiefly

concerned with countering threats from communist sources. Thereafter, fascist threats were also made a priority.

3.3 **The Security Service.** Formal responsibility for assessing all threats to national security (apart from those posed by anarchist and Irish terrorist groups) passed to MI5 in October 1931, and at this date MI5 was renamed the Security Service. It continued to report to the War Office. The new Service was responsible for counter-espionage, vetting checks for government departments, advising firms engaged on defence work on security measures against espionage and sabotage, and dealing with reports from the public about suspicious activity. On the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, additional responsibilities (such as monitoring enemy aliens and advising on internment) were added. The Service also operated the strategically vital 'Double Cross' system, in which identified enemy agents were 'turned' and used to feed false information to the enemy. Following the end of the war in 1945, the Service's attentions returned to the threat from the Soviet Union and its allies, and the Communist Party of Great Britain. In 1948 (in the Attlee Declaration) the Government announced that communists and fascists were to be excluded from work vital to the security of the state. This was achieved through a vetting system which the Service was charged to support. Responsibility for the work of the Service passed from the War Office to the Home Office in 1952. The Home Secretary, David Maxwell Fyfe, issued a directive describing the responsibilities of the Service and the role of its Director General, which provided the basis for the Service's work until 1989. Details of the Service's responsibilities and rôle were revealed publicly for the first time in Lord Denning's report into the Profumo affair in 1963 (Cmnd. 2512).

3.4 From the late 1960s, much of the Service's attention was diverted from the communist threat to that posed by International and Irish terrorist organisations, and responsibility for leading the intelligence effort against Irish Republican terrorism on mainland Britain was transferred to the Service in 1992. By that time the threat from communist subversion had diminished significantly with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it no longer required a significant Service effort. The Security Service Act 1989 placed the Service on a statutory basis for the first time, set out the functions of the Service and described the range of threats that it is responsible for countering. An amendment to the Act in 1996 added a responsibility to support the activities of law enforcement agencies in the prevention and detection of serious crime.

4 Relevant collection themes in The National Archives' Acquisition Policy

4.1 The Acquisition Policy outlines certain themes, which form the basis of The National Archives' appraisal and selection decisions. Of these

themes, the following are of potential relevance to the work of the Security Service and its predecessor organisations:

- 2.2.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state -
 - 2.2.1.3 External relations and defence policy
 - 2.2.1.4 Administration of justice and the maintenance of security

5 Key Themes within the Security Service and its predecessor organisations

5.1 Material selected using the following criteria will document the Security Service's and its predecessor organisations' involvement in the events and activities described in section 3 above. In general, the material preserved will encompass:

- 1909-1918 the espionage threat to the UK and to the British Empire from Germany
- 1919-1930 the growth of Communism and communist inspired subversion and sabotage in the UK
- 1931-1945 the growth of Fascism and the espionage threat to the UK and the British Empire from Germany
- 1946-1950s the espionage threat to the UK from the Soviet Union and its allies, including measures taken to counter the threat from subversion
- 1960s-1990s the espionage threat from the Soviet Union, the growth of international and Irish terrorism, the threat from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and from serious and organised crime, the end of the Cold War and the reduction in the threat posed by subversion

5.2 In accordance with the selection themes set out above, records will henceforth be selected for permanent preservation which meet the following criteria:

5.2.A Records of major investigations

- i. Investigations and operations that involved the deployment of substantial resources or intrusive investigative techniques. This will include all targets against whom interception, eavesdropping or other intrusive techniques were deployed
- ii. Investigations and operations which led to significant outcomes. This will include any cases that resulted in:
 - a) The criminal prosecution of one or more individuals, where the Service was involved in the investigation
 - b) The expulsion, deportation, exclusion or internment of one or more individuals on the basis of Security Service advice or intelligence
 - c) The disruption of the activities of terrorists, hostile intelligence services, proliferators or major criminals

d) The collection of especially important intelligence

5.2.B Records of subversive figures, terrorists, spies, defectors, proliferators, arms traffickers, major criminals and adverse vetting responses

- i. Senior officials of communist, fascist or other subversive parties, and other influential members of those parties
- ii. All those who planned, directed or carried out terrorist activities
- iii. All officers and co-opted workers of hostile foreign intelligence services and their agents
- iv. All defectors and asylum applicants of intelligence interest
- v. British nationals working for the enemy in wartime
- vi. British fascists in the armed forces or police during the 1930s or World War II
- vii. Those with a substantial involvement in arms trafficking
- viii. Those with a substantial involvement in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- ix. Major criminals
- x. All files where the Service has given a vetting response other than “No security objection” (NSO) on either the subject or a relative, and files where the Service has been in contact with the Armed Services about the vetting status of a National Serviceman

5.2.C Records of individuals who achieved positions of public eminence or were involved in important historical events

Individuals who, in addition to being of security interest, were:

- i. Prominent in politics at home or abroad
- ii. Senior UK public officials (broadly Under Secretary level or above)
- iii. Prominent individuals in public life
- iv. Leaders of colonial independence movements
- v. Prominent figures in literature, the arts and sciences
- vi. Celebrities in entertainment and the media
- vii. Leading figures in important historical events

The personnel files of senior or prominent members of the Security Service will also be selected for preservation.

5.2.D Records of causes célèbres in a security context

- i. Individuals or events that were linked – correctly or incorrectly – in the public mind to the Service, or were the subjects of extensive publicity, scandal or notoriety
- ii. Records will be selected for any case involving the Service where there was a reference to the Strasbourg institutions under the European Convention of Human Rights

- iii. Records where the Service was the subject of legal action in the UK
- iv. Records where a 'purge' or vetting case was subject to appeal
- v. Records will be selected for any case where Service staff and/or intelligence were used in evidence about operations or investigations not covered by 5.2.A or B above

5.2.E Files which contain original papers of historical interest

Original records linked to individuals or events of historical interest.

5.2.F Service policy, organisation and procedures, subjects and organisations studied, and events with which the Service was involved

All records relating to the Service's policies, procedures, capabilities and organisational arrangements in its core activities, and to the organisations and subjects studied will be preserved. These will include any documents relating to the discharge of the Service's responsibilities.

5.2.G Files and records which are in some way "period pieces"

Records that may not in themselves satisfy other selection criteria but which capture particularly well the prevailing attitudes, approaches or culture of the Service at the time, or the circumstances in which it operated. This will include all records now surviving that pre-date 1930.

5.2.H Milestones in the Service's history

Any records relating to the Service's foundation and major events in its history that are not covered by other categories.

5.2.I Selection of files for individuals

A selection of files on individuals who were not of significance nationally or internationally at the time they came to the notice of the Service will be preserved. The selection will show the geographical, national and social range of these individuals. A selection methodology for each file type will be agreed with The National Archives.

5.2.J Sample of files

A sample of not less than 1 file in 100 will be preserved from the files on individuals not selected under other criteria and which would otherwise be destroyed. A sampling methodology for each file type will be agreed with The National Archives.

5.2.K Indices

All means of reference to files will be preserved.

- 5.3 The files identified at sections 5.2.I and 5.2.J above will be found in the "PF" and "List" types (see 6.1 below). The "PF" type is large and homogenous without internal structure, organisation or stratification. The "List" type comprises a number of different series, each of which is homogenous. When a new file of either "PF" type or "List" series is required, the next sequential number available is used. The required selection (or representative example) of files at 5.2.I will be achieved by a random systematic sample of 1% of files, from a starting population of those files not selected under other criteria. From that 1%, a selection of files will be made systematically to show the geographical, national and social range of individuals. Because of the homogenous nature of both the "PF" type and "List" series, this will produce a statistically accurate representation of the geographical, social and national range of individuals covered. The required sample of files at 5.2.J will be achieved by a random systematic sample of 1% of files, from a starting population of those files not selected under earlier criteria. The number of the first sample file to be selected, between 1 and 100, will be generated randomly, and thereafter every 100th file not selected under other criteria will be sampled.

6 Structure of the Security Service's Filing Systems and Correlation to Collection Themes

- 6.1 Files on individuals may relate to people or groups of people who have never been investigated by the Service, such as those who have received protective security advice (List), or to people who may have been subject of an enquiry or investigation (PF). Subjects and organisations studied by the Service are, respectively, denoted by the indicator "SF" or "OF", and files which relate to Service policy and administration by "PoF". A sophisticated numerical system allows for the indexing, correlation and tracking of all files. A number of older files are held on microfiche or microfilm.
- 6.2 In the main, Criteria A, B, C, D, E, I and J in section 5.2 above will preserve "PF" or "List" files, and Criteria F, G, and H will preserve "PoF", "SF" and "OF" files. The nature of the Security Service's and its predecessor organisations' work, however, is such that, for example, any investigation into an individual member of a terrorist organisation will have a number of linked or relevant impersonal files, which relate to that organisation or to terrorism generally.
- 6.3 A number of files dating from before the Second World War were destroyed by fire as a result of enemy bombing of Wormwood Scrubs Prison (where the Security Service's Registry had been based) in September 1940. Other files were destroyed following reorganisations after both the First and Second World Wars.

7 Implementation of Selection Policy

- 7.1 The Service is committed to compliance with the Public Records Act 1958 in selecting records of historical interest for permanent preservation and eventual transfer to The National Archives. The selection criteria will be applied without regard to whether the records may appear to reflect well or badly on the Service.

March 2001, Revised November 2005