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Office of Security

The Value of the Polygraph in CIA's Personnel Security Program ~~(S)~~

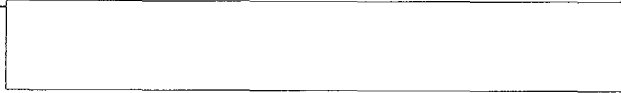
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The Value of the Polygraph in CIA's Personnel Security Program ~~(C)~~

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[redacted] (U)

The Value of the Polygraph in CIA's Personnel Security Program (S)

Summary

The polygraph examination is a central feature of the Agency's personnel security system.¹ [redacted]

[redacted] it plays a vital role in decisions about prospective or current employees. Any information that is obtained in testing is strictly protected and limited to what is essential for the clearance process. (S)

Personnel security in CIA directly benefits from use of the polygraph through the:

- Acquisition by the admissions of individuals of security-pertinent information not [redacted]
- [redacted]
- Support to special investigations.
- Encouragement of adherence to proper security practices. (S)

Other not so apparent benefits are nonetheless significant. [redacted]

[redacted] It also has helped ease physical and procedural controls [redacted] thereby facilitating a number of activities and cutting costs. (S)

Given the essential role of the polygraph in the Agency, working to gauge and enhance the validity of the testing has been a longstanding objective. [redacted]

[redacted] Adjudication— [redacted]

[redacted] is a key crosscheck on the process. (S)

The polygraph's ability to elicit admissions [redacted] that could threaten national security is likely to remain an invaluable feature. [redacted]

[redacted] Consequently, the risk of compromise of these undertakings—particularly by employees who have access to the information—remains a core concern for personnel security. (S)

¹This analysis addresses use of the polygraph in processing clearances [redacted]

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The Agency's personnel security program seeks to ensure that all staff employees or people affiliated with the organization [redacted] meet the security criteria set forth in [redacted] (Director of Central Intelligence Directive (DCID) 1/14 applies for determining access to sensitive compartmented information.)² Although CIA uses several sources of information for evaluating a person's security dependability, [redacted] This stems from the organization's extensive assessments of and experiences with this investigative tool in the past four decades. ~~(S)~~

The polygraph has been used in the Agency for three main functions:

- Initial Screening. It is one of several screening mechanisms used to evaluate the large pool of applicants for employment with the Agency.

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] Prospective employees answer questions [redacted]
[redacted]

- Reinvestigations. The test also is used in association with [redacted] periodic security reviews.

[redacted]
[redacted] Reinvestigation Program (RIP), which responds to the CIA requirement to reinvestigate personnel [redacted]

² Personnel Security Standards and Procedures Governing Eligibility for Access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI), 22 January 1992. ~~(S)~~

What is a Polygraph Test?

The polygraph instrument records physiological changes with three sensors attached to an individual being tested:

- A blood pressure cuff—the same device physicians use to measure systolic and diastolic blood pressure—is usually wrapped around the upper arm, where the brachial artery is located. This sensor is responsive to artery movements.
- A tube placed around the individual's chest to measure rib cage and diaphragm movements during breathing.
- Small pads attached to the fingers to measure galvanic skin response. ~~(S)~~

These sensors record the physiological changes in ink as tracings on a continuously running paper chart. For subsequent review, the examiner indexes the reactions on the chart to specific questions asked. ~~(S)~~

The analysis of the monitoring and a summary of the key points of discussions about the test—particularly admissions made—constitute the test results. ~~(S)~~

(DCID 1/14 also requires recertification of SCI-cleared personnel every five years.) It features a limited counterintelligence (CI) polygraph examination plus a mandatory background investigation (BI). [redacted]

- Special Investigations. [redacted]
[redacted]

[Redacted]

Primary Benefits

The polygraph has proved to be a crucial asset for the Agency in eliciting important leads related to personnel security. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] (C)

Unique Source of Security Information

Probably the most useful aspect of polygraph-acquired information is that it frequently is unique and may be something known only to an individual or a very small circle of associates. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

One measure of the acquisition of such otherwise unobtainable information was provided in a 1992 study by [Redacted] OS. [Redacted] randomly selected and then examined [Redacted] cases of [Redacted] in 1991. To determine what type of and how much additional information had been supplied during polygraph tests, [Redacted] compared it to information provided by applicants on their personal history statements (PHS). This study showed that [Redacted] percent of the applicants in the sample admitted during the polygraph that they had intentionally withheld or falsified information on their PHS. It also indicated that such individuals were [Redacted] more likely than applicants who made no omissions on their PHS to have excluded anything about their involvement [Redacted] and nearly twice as likely to have concealed [Redacted]

[Redacted] (C)

Another indicator of the unique contribution of polygraph information for personnel screening was described in a separate 1991 analysis [Redacted] This evaluation involved [Redacted] applicants (from the period 1 January 1986-31 December 1989) whose urinalyses detected the presence of at least one illegal drug. The results of the assessment showed noteworthy differences in candor on the issue of drug use before and after the polygraph.

• During the polygraph pretest interview, [Redacted] denied [Redacted] But after the test, when asked to explain their reactions on the polygraph to the question [Redacted] of the [Redacted] admitted lying.

• Also before the polygraph test, [Redacted] of the [Redacted] answered no to a question about [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

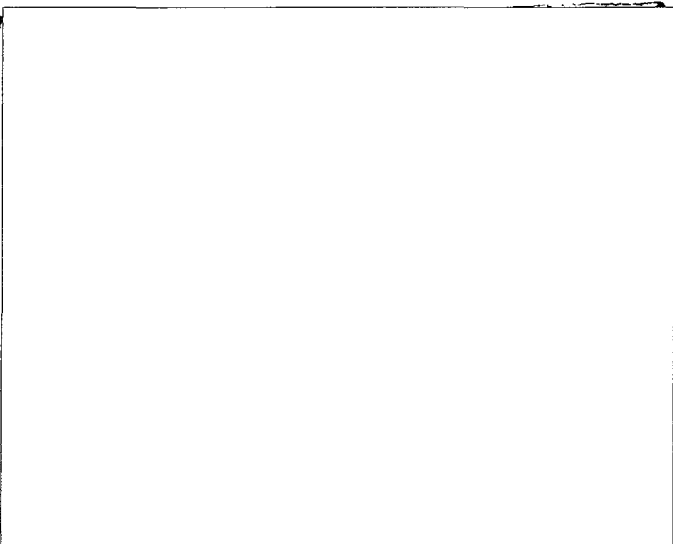
(C)

A review of cases in which other government employees designated to serve temporarily in the Agency were turned down as a result of polygraph-acquired information further demonstrates the singular value of this source. [Redacted]

[Redacted]



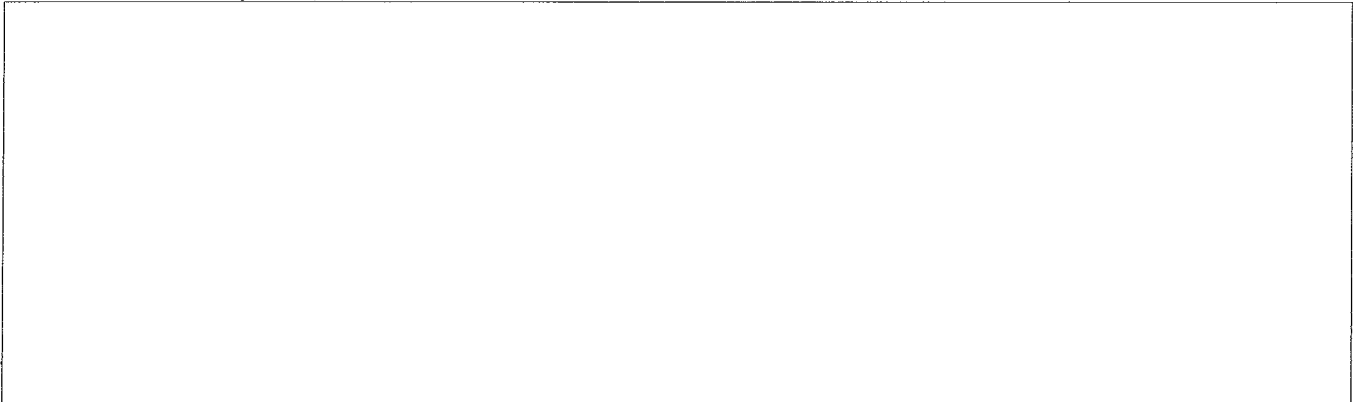
[Redacted] (The issues brought to the fore by the test had been present before or at the time of the most recent BI.) [Redacted]



Productivity of Sources

CIA's decision to grant or deny a security clearance or an approval for access to CIA classified data or facilities depends on information about a person's loyalty, trustworthiness, stability, reliability, judgment, and character. This information is drawn mainly from three types of sources:

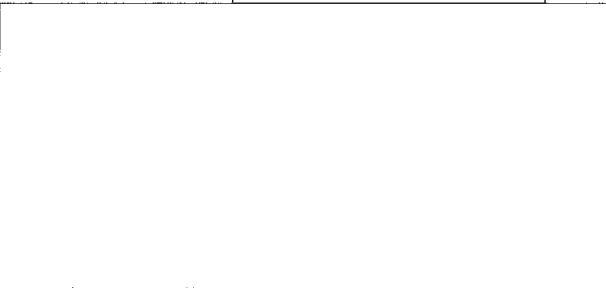
- *Subject.* Through the personal history statement or discussions with the individual, including during polygraph testing.
- *Interviews.* Through conversations with coworkers, supervisors, social acquaintances, neighbors and, if appropriate, physicians, psychiatrists, ex-spouses, and relatives.
- *Records.* Through checks of law enforcement, credit, medical/psychiatric, employment, residence, and education files. (U)



[Redacted] (S)

cases "to demonstrate . . . that major damage to national security has been averted through polygraph testing." [Redacted]

The Agency's reinvestigations [Redacted] have been bolstered by polygraph-acquired information. [Redacted]



[Redacted] (S)

[Redacted] (S)

The value-added feature of the polygraph for exposing important security-relevant information not picked up by routine BIs is further illustrated in a 1984 DCI study. Covering the period January 1980-September 1983, it cited various Community



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Deterrence

Difficult to quantify, but still a factor in calculating the value to personnel security, is the deterrence to espionage that the polygraph offers.

[Redacted]

Aid to Special Investigations

Tipoffs from the polygraph about theretofore unknown actions of individuals have been important contributions to Agency special investigations.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Supplementary Benefits

Indirect, but nonetheless important, benefits from using the polygraph have included:

- Forgoing [Redacted]

Polygraph testing, together with background

investigations, has been instrumental in avoiding hiring applicants with a pattern of

[Redacted]

- Facilitating the flow of classified information within the organization.

[Redacted]

- Using minimal information security checks.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Polygraph Test Types

The multiissue test is used in nonspecific situations, such as preemployment screening. The Agency uses this type of test to cover counterintelligence and other security issues, generally including one question per issue. A multiissue test requires considerable discussion before the test, as the examiner goes over each question that will be asked. This allows the individual being tested to talk about any pertinent information that he or she feels might affect responses. Posttest discussions are centered on the individual's reactions to specific questions. (U)

The specific-issue test focuses on a single issue, and consists of several sharply defined questions about that issue. The Agency uses this type of test in conjunction with a multiissue test in which one or more issues were unresolved, or as part of an investigation or inquiry into a security-related incident in which an Agency employee allegedly is involved. (U)

[Redacted]

Dealing With Concerns

Because of the importance of the polygraph to the Agency's personnel security system, OS and other components have long sought to examine and find solutions to controversial aspects of the testing. This process—particularly long-term research on polygraph issues and specialized joint projects—received a boost following inspections of OS by the Office of the Inspector General in 1986 and 1988. (U)

Validity

The validity of the polygraph has been a core concern for the Agency and the subject of many debates within the government and scientific community. If the polygraph examination is insufficiently accurate, applicants or employees who seek to harm the organization and US national security might be able to succeed in their objectives. At the same time, inadequate validity of a polygraph examination without any countervailing data might result in an unjustified conclusion that someone is not trustworthy. (U)

The Agency has undertaken numerous inquiries into the validity (accuracy) and reliability (consistency of results) of the polygraph. For instance, the Moss Committee hearings in the mid-1960s on the use of the polygraph spurred an in-depth review of the Agency's procedures by OS and the [redacted] (U)

OS, OMS, and [redacted] formed the Polygraph Validity Working Group in 1987 for the specific purpose of proposing research studies on the validity of the process as used in CIA. The group identified five major studies in August 1989 that have not yet been done, owing to funding and resource limitations. The recommended studies include the:

- Analysis of the impact of modified questions on test results.
- Evaluation of the answers to a question about [redacted] and the results of [redacted]
- Comparison of posttest admissions with examiners' interpretations and personal history data supplied by the subjects.
- Blind reassessments of charts from previous cases.

Adjudicative Issues According to Agency and Community Standards

Loyalty and/or foreign affiliation
Cohabitant, close relatives, and associates
Sexual considerations
Undesirable character traits
Financial considerations
Alcohol use
Drug activities
Emotional, mental, and personality disorders
Law violations and criminal conduct
Security violations
Outside activities
Failure to cooperate (U)

- Comparison of the information obtained by the BI and polygraph on three issues. (U)

At the same time, OS has redoubled efforts to identify and at least minimize factors in the tests that could adversely affect their accuracy. The possibility of misinterpreting reactions has been lessened by:

- *Test preparation.* Applicants or employees preparing to take a test are carefully informed about all aspects of the process. The objective of this pretest briefing is to reduce anxiety about test procedures. This portion of the process has particular importance, given that the instruments will register physiological signs of emotional responses.
- *Discussion about the questions.* Polygraph examiners talk with individuals about all questions to be asked in a test. No surprise or trick questions are introduced while monitoring is under way, and anything asked must be related to Intelligence Community-defined issues. To avoid undue negative reactions, the wording of these questions may be modified as a result of the discussions.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

• *Instrumentation.* For the past several years, OS has worked with other Agency offices to develop more precise instrumentation to

[Redacted]

• *Checks on chart interpretations.* All polygraph charts are reviewed by at least one other more senior examiner to enhance prospects for more accurate interpretations of results.

• *Examiner quality.* Recognition that examiner skill has an important effect on improving accuracy rates has promoted rigorous selection procedures followed by in-house and external training for Agency polygraphers. (S)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

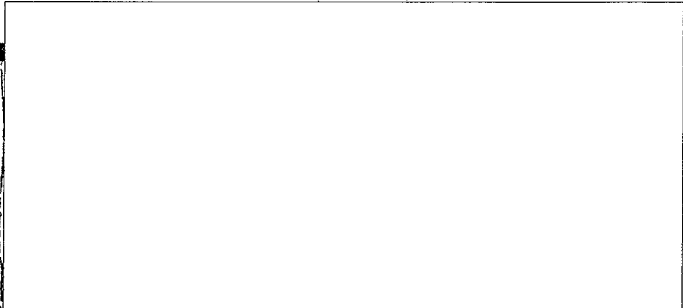
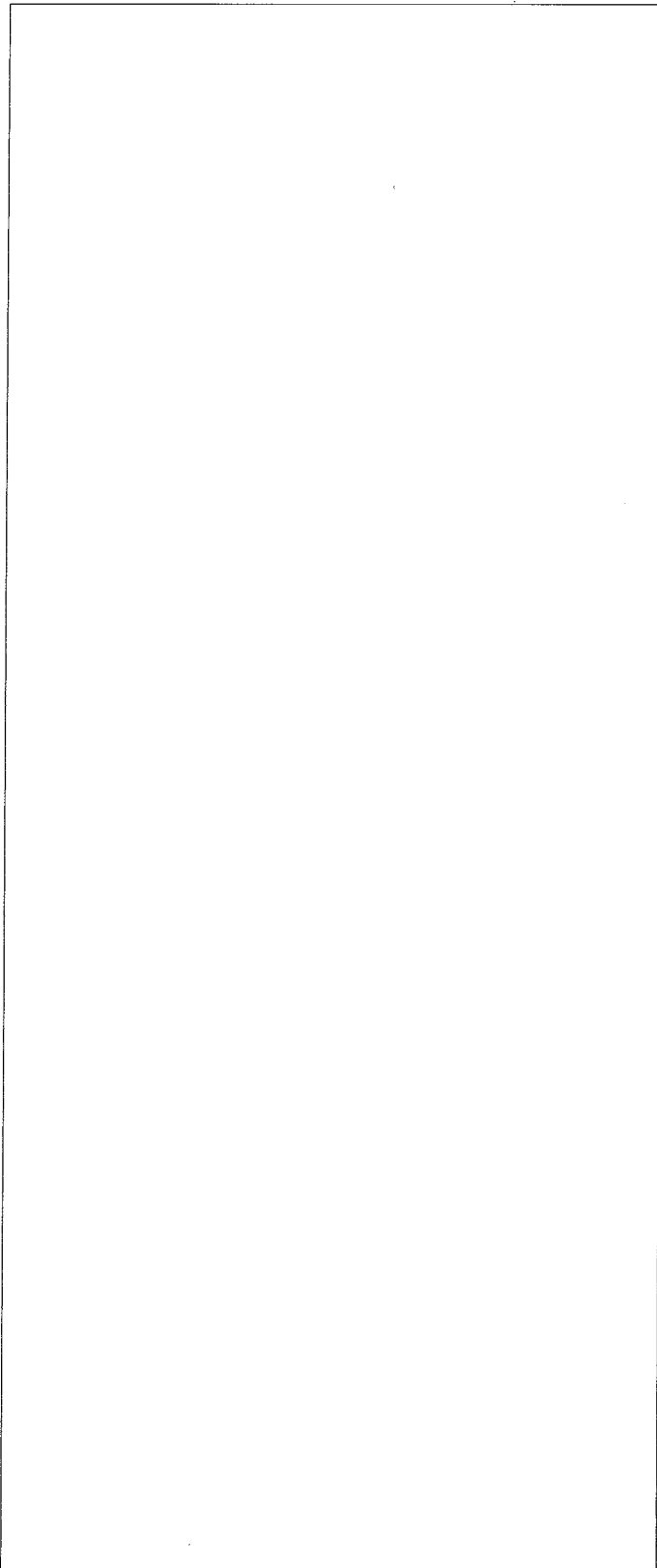
Probably the most significant check on the validity of the polygraph in CIA is the adjudication process.

[Redacted]

Intrusiveness


Responses to the issue of the intrusiveness of the polygraph process generally have concentrated—in the Agency and elsewhere—on limiting the information obtained to what is essential for the clearance process and on maintaining its privacy.

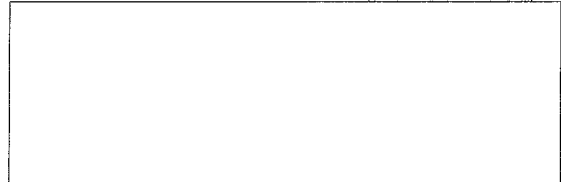
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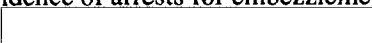
Other Considerations

The polygraph's ability to uncover information about security-relevant issues that people aim to conceal may be particularly useful, given changing societal factors. A recent analysis by a security consultant suggests some of these developments have implications for personnel security:

- Lowering of ethical standards. 



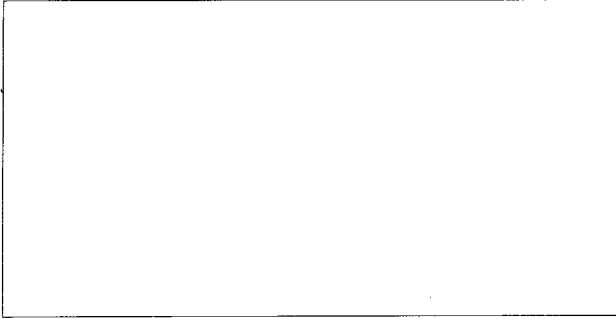
- Changing employer-employee relations. Shrinking workforces are one factor—according to the consultant—that is eroding employees' sense of job security and loyalty to employers. Employees, in response, may be focusing more on their self interest and less on commitment to a job or organization.

- Higher incidence of arrests for embezzlement and fraud. 



 (U)

How directly these developments—or other shifts in values or behavior in society—bear on current or prospective Agency applicants is unknown, but any increased potential for a betrayal of trust should be carefully assessed. Insiders, after all, continue to pose the greatest threat to national security



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