About NSA

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1. **What does NSA/CSS do?**

The National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS) is the Nation's cryptologic organization. Its twofold mission is the protection of U.S. information systems and the production of foreign signals intelligence information. NSA/CSS is on the high-tech frontier of communications and data processing and is a major center of foreign language analysis and research within the U.S. government.

1. **What is "cryptology"?**

Cryptology is the art and science of code making and codebreaking. According to legend, when Julius Caesar sent messages to his trusted associates, he didn't trust the messengers. So he devised a "cryptosystem" or "cipher" - a method of disguising messages so that only certain people could see through the disguise - and replaced (in terms of our alphabet) every A with a D, every B with an E, every C with an F, and so on. Only those who knew the "Shift by Three" rule could decipher his message (called a "cryptogram").

Like Caesar, if you are creating and using a cryptosystem, you are practicing "Cryptography." On the other hand, if you are trying to break an opponent's cryptosystem, you are practicing "Cryptanalysis." NSA/CSS practices the art and science of "cryptology," which is the study of both cryptography and cryptanalysis.

1. **When did NSA become part of the U.S. Intelligence Community?**

President Truman and the National Security Council issued a revised version of the National Security Council Intelligence Directive (NSCID) No. 9 on 24 October 1952, which resulted in the formation of NSA on 4 November 1952.

1. **What organizations are included in the U.S. Intelligence Community?**

There are 15 federal organizations in the Intelligence Community:

* + National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS)
  + [Central Intelligence Agency](http://www.cia.gov) (CIA)
  + [National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency](http://www.nima.mil) (NGA)
  + [Federal Bureau of Investigation](http://www.fbi.gov) (FBI)
  + [Defense Intelligence Agency](http://www.dia.mil) (DIA)
  + [National Reconnaissance Office](http://www.nro.gov) (NRO)
  + [Department of Energy](http://www.energy.gov) (DoE)
  + [Army Intelligence](http://www.inscom.army.mil)
  + [Air Force Intelligence](http://aia.lackland.af.mil) (AIA)
  + [Navy Intelligence](http://www.nmic.navy.mil) (ONI)
  + [Marine Corps Intelligence](http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/DirInt/default.htm)
  + [Department of Treasury](http://www.treasury.gov) (OIS)
  + [Department of State](http://www.state.gov) (INR)
  + [Coast Guard](http://www.uscg.mil) and
  + [Department of Homeland Security](http://www.dhs.gov) (DHS)

1. **What is the Central Security Service?**

DoD Directive 5100.20, dated 23 Dec 1971, authorized and prescribed the authorities, functions, and responsibilities of NSA/CSS. The CSS was officially established by NSA in 1972 to promote full partnership between the NSA and the cryptologic elements of the Forces. Combining NSA and CSS, provided a more unified Department of Defense (DoD) cryptologic effort. The CSS comprises all U.S. military services – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. To further ensure joint operations, the Director of NSA is also the Chief of the CSS.

1. **Who are NSA/CSS' customers?**

The NSA/CSS serves a variety of customers and provides them with what they need, when they need it, and in a form they can use. Specifically, NSA/CSS provides intelligence products and services to the White House, Executive Agencies (such as the CIA and State Department), Chairman and Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), military Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) and component commands, military departments, multinational forces, and U.S. allies. In addition, NSA/CSS provides information assurance products and services to government customers and government contractors, as required.

1. **How many people work for the NSA/CSS and what is its budget?**

Neither the number of employees nor the size of the Agency's budget can be publicly disclosed. However, if the NSA/CSS were considered a corporation in terms of dollars spent, floor space occupied, and personnel employed, it would rank in the top 10 percent of the Fortune 500 companies. It is far from true that NSA/CSS has an unlimited "black" budget, unknown by other government entities. While the budget and size of NSA/CSS are classified, these details are known by the Office of Management and Budget, by both the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), and by the Defense Subcommittees of the Appropriations Committees in both houses of Congress. Resources allocated to NSA/CSS are subject to rigorous examination and approval processes.

In 1997, the aggregate figure for all U.S. government intelligence and intelligence-related activities – of which NSA/CSS was one segment – was made public for the first time. The aggregate intelligence budget was $26.6 billion in fiscal year (FY) 1997 and $26.7 billion for FY98. Because the intelligence budget might affect national security or reveal information that is confidential under federal law, a federal judge ruled in 1999 that it was not required to divulge the intelligence budget for 1999 and beyond.

1. **What is the breakdown of the NSA/CSS workforce?**

NSA/CSS employees are both civilian and military (from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard). The breakdown is approximately 50 percent civilian and 50 percent military. They represent a unique combination of specialties: analysts, engineers, physicists, mathematicians, linguists, computer scientists, researchers, security officers, data flow experts, managers, and administrative and clerical specialists, to name several.

1. **Who leads NSA/CSS and how is that person selected?**

[LTG Keith B. Alexander, USA](http://www.nsa.gov/about/about00022.cfm), is the Director, National Security Agency/Chief, Central Security Service. According to Section 201 of Title 10, the Director, NSA/CSS is recommended by the U.S. Secretary of Defense and approved by the President of the United States.

In accordance with Department of Defense Directive 5100.20, dated December 23, 1971, the Director NSA/Chief, CSS is always a commissioned officer of the military services with at least a rank of three stars during the period of his incumbency. The Deputy Director is always a technically-experienced civilian.

The Agency's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) supports the Director in guiding the workforce. They are:

* + the Deputy Director, [Mr. John C. Inglis](http://www.nsa.gov/about/john_inglis.cfm), the highest ranking civilian at NSA
  + the Signals Intelligence Director (SID) and
  + the Information Assurance Director (IAD)

1. **Can you explain the NSA and CSS insignias?**

In 1965, LTG Marshall S. Carter, USA, Director, NSA ordered a device to be designed to represent the National Security Agency. As a result, the [NSA insignia](http://www.nsa.gov/history/histo00018.cfm) is designed to represent the mission of NSA/CSS.

In 1996, Lt Gen Kenneth A. Minihan, USAF, requested an insignia be created which represented both NSA and CSS. Although NSA had its emblem, one had not yet been made for CSS. As a result, the emblem was designed and adopted in that year. The [CSS insignia](http://www.nsa.gov/history/histo00019.cfm) was changed in 2002 to reflect the Coast Guard representation.

1. **Does NSA/CSS offer tours of its facilities?**

For security reasons, NSA/CSS does not provide tours of secure facilities to the general public. However tours of the National Cryptologic Museum are available Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information about the [National Cryptologic Museum](http://www.nsa.gov/museum/index.cfm), call 301-688-5848.

1. **What is the National Cryptologic Museum?**

NSA/CSS is very proud of the [National Cryptologic Museum](http://www.nsa.gov/museum/index.cfm), located on Colony 7 Road, just off Rt. 32 and Rt. 295 in Maryland. The museum collection contains thousands of artifacts, which collectively serve to illustrate the history of the cryptologic profession.

Admission is free and the museum is open to the public. School groups and civic organizations are welcome. Hours of operation are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of the month. For more information about the museum, call 301-688-5848.

Adjacent to the museum, is "[National Vigilance Park](http://www.nsa.gov/vigilance/index.cfm)" and the "Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial." This memorial honors the many aerial reconnaissance crews who lost their lives in the performance of their duties. For more information about Vigilance Park, call the Museum at 301-688-5848.

1. **How can I find out if the government has records on me or records that might refer to me?**

Both the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act establish procedures for individuals to seek access to Agency records.

The Privacy Act is a statute that regulates the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of personal information by federal agencies. It allows U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens access to records that are maintained by that individual's name or other personal identifiers. Typical Privacy Act records at this Agency would include the personnel, security, training, and medical records of Agency employees, applicants, and affiliates.

The Freedom of Information Act, on the other hand, is an access statute that allows anyone the right to seek access to government records. Since NSA is authorized by law to collect only foreign intelligence information, we would not ordinarily expect to find responsive information about U.S. individuals in other than the Privacy Act-type files.

You may submit a request under the Freedom of Information Act by visiting our web page at [http://www.nsa.gov/foia/](http://www.nsa.gov/foia/index.cfm) or by writing to NSA/CSS at:

The National Security Agency  
FOI/PA Services (DC321)  
9800 Savage Road, STE 6248  
Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6248

1. **Why can't you talk about something after it has been in the newspaper?**

NSA/CSS has a responsibility to the citizens of the United States not to disclose our sources or methods of intelligence, as we could potentially lose vital information, with dire consequences to the United States. For this reason, the long-standing policy within the United States Intelligence Community is that we refrain from commenting on actual or alleged intelligence issues.

1. **What is NSA’s outlook on legislature related to encryption export?**

NSA/CSS fully supports the Administration's encryption export policy. We believe that it is a balanced approach that enables us to carry out successfully our national security responsibilities to support government decision makers and military operators with information in time to make a difference.

1. **I've seen NSA/CSS in movies and on TV. Do you assassinate people? Do you secretly perform experiments on us?**

Because we work with highly sensitive information, we are frequently the subject of speculation – and highly imaginative and creative fictitious pieces in the media. However, it is important to distinguish fact from fiction. The fact is that the Executive Order 12333 (EO 12333) strictly prohibits any intelligence agency from conducting these unethical activities, and we strictly abide by that Order.

To specifically answer your two questions, here are excerpts from [Executive Order 12333](http://www.nsa.gov/notices/notic00003.cfm?Address=http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/120481d.htm):

Regarding human experimentation: "No agency within the Intelligence Community shall sponsor, contract for or conduct research on human subjects except in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services. The subject's informed consent shall be documented as required by those guidelines."

Regarding assassination: "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination."

1. **I've heard that you are one of Maryland's largest employers. Do you take any social responsibility towards your community?**

NSA/CSS is the largest single employer in Anne Arundel County. Our employees provide helpful support and make contributions to the local community in a variety of ways:

*For the Health of the Community:*

NSA/CSS' on-site Blood Donor Program has been operating in partnership with the American Red Cross for over a quarter of a century. Agency employees donate the largest amount of blood (averaging approximately 300 units per month) to the Chesapeake/Potomac region.

224 preliminary bone marrow screenings were collected in 2004. More than 5,000 NSA employee names are listed in the National Registry. Of those listed, 31 employees have been matched and called upon to donate. Bone marrow matching probability is about 1 in 20,000. The agency donor rate is considered quite high. Bone marrow transplantation is the preferred treatment for more than 50 fatal disorders, and it is estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 Americans are in need of a transplant each year. Less than 1% of needy recipients find bone marrow donors to help them and most die waiting for a successful match.

A partnership with the Walter Reed Army Medical Center enables employees to donate white cells or platelets through hemapheresis extraction, on site. Each donation process takes between 2 1/2 and 3 hours. In 2004, 31 donors made 128 platelets donations.

*Partnership with Education:*

NSA/CSS' Project OUTREACH provides excess computers and laboratory equipment to non-profit educational institutions to support mathematics and science education. Equipment with an initial purchase price valuation of over $35 million was donated to approximately 100 schools in 10 states and the District of Columbia.

NSA/CSS' "Partners in Education" program is a collaboration between NSA/CSS and three local schools. Today, the program has over 100 volunteers who help repair school equipment, install and maintain computers, mentor students, and sponsor a variety of activities.

The High School Work Study (HSWS) Program at NSA/CSS has existed for more than 30 years. HSWS participants are given many career opportunities and responsibilities as clerical assistants and computer aides, and become part of the NSA/CSS team. More than 3,122 high school seniors from local area high schools have participated in the HSWS Program to date, and over 1,710 of them have accepted employment with NSA/CSS following graduation.

The Mathematics Education Partnership Program (MEPP) is an Agency outreach program to promote math and science education. It works with nearly 500 schools in Maryland and the surrounding area, and is designed to encourage the learning of math and the use of technology in the classroom. During the 2003-2004 school year the MEPP provided nearly 200 judges for 59 local science fairs, gave over 1300 math talks to more than 27,000 students, and chalked up nearly 5000 additional volunteer hours with our partner schools.

We are proud to have a Gifted and Talented Program for local area high school students who are in the top ranks of their high school and show an interest and aptitude in electrical engineering or computer science. The students work part time at NSA/CSS during the summer following their junior and senior years of high school. With a mentor's assistance, they engage in research and developmental projects relating to real work applications in electrical engineering or computer science.

One of NSA/CSS' oldest educational programs is the Cooperative Education Program (Co-op). This nationally recognized program allows college students to integrate classroom study with practical work experience at NSA/CSS in the areas of computer science, engineering, and selected foreign languages. NSA/CSS currently employs 163 Co-ops from 50 colleges and universities.

In FY04, NSA programmed $2.5m in support of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Institution Program (HBCU/MI). Through the program, NSA continued to be a leader in developing effective partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities and other minority institutions to increase opportunities for these Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to participate and benefit from federal programs and to assist in strengthening their ability to provide quality education. Under the auspices of the HBCU/MI Program, NSA has developed partnerships with IHEs in ten states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Locally more than $632K was awarded in FY04 to IHEs in the state of Maryland.

*Environmental Protection:*

In 2004, the NSA/CSS recycled more than 4,350 tons of aluminum, cardboard, toner cartridges, classified aluminum platters, paper, lead acid batteries and other recyclable materials.

NSA/CSS' Secure Paper Conversion Services Work Center declassifies and recycles all water-soluble paper through the operation of a wet vat and baler system. After paper is converted to pulp, it is transported to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO), sold to paper companies and converted into various paper and cardboard products such as pizza boxes, clothing boxes, and wrappings for food products.

The revenue generated from the recovery of precious metals in the debris left over from declassifying the NSA/CSS' film and printed circuit boards goes to the U.S. Treasury.

Since developing a partnership with a private electronics recycler in February 1997, the NSA/CSS has generated more than $3 million in revenue through its computer recycling operation.

*Volunteering and Working for Charity:*

Approximately 31 percent of the total contributions received by the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) of Central Maryland (which distributes monetary contributions to charity) come from Agency employees. Contributions made in 2004 enabled NSA/CSS' distinction as a member of the "Million Dollar Club" to continue for a 18th year in a row. NSA employees contributed $1,788,022 to the CFC Campaign in 2004.

NSA/CSS' "VolunteerLink" Program connects NSA/CSS employees with volunteer service opportunities in their communities.

1. **What are some of the Jargons and Acronyms used at the NSA?**

**CIPHER** – A system for concealing plain text by transposing the letters or numbers or substituting other letters or numbers according to a key. Also called a "cryptosystem."

**CODE** – A system for replacing words, phrases, letters or numbers by other words or groups of letters or numbers for concealment or brevity.

**COMINT** – Communications Intelligence – Information obtained for intelligence purposes from the intercept of foreign communications (by other than the intended recipient).

**COMPUSEC** – Computer Security – The protection of computers from exploitation by foreign intelligence services and "hackers."

**COMSEC** – Communications Security – The protection of communications from exploitation by foreign intelligence services. This includes ensuring the security of U.S. cryptosystems, the preventing electronic emissions from various communications equipment, and the physically protecting communications security equipment.

**COUNTERINTELLIGENCE** – Information gathered and activities conducted to protect against espionage and other intelligence activities.

**CRYPTOLOGY** – The science and art of making and breaking codes and ciphers.

**CRYPTOGRAPHY** – The science and art of making codes and ciphers.

**CRYPTANALYSIS** – The conversion of encrypted messages into plain text without having the initial knowledge of the key used in encryption.

**CSS** – Central Security Service - The CSS comprises all U.S. military elements – Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines and works to ensure a full partnership between NSA and the military.

**DECODE** – To convert from an encoded message to equivalent plain text.

**DIRNSA** – The Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

**DoD** – The Department of Defense.

**ENCODE** – To replace plain text words with code groups.

**ENCRYPT** – To conceal plain text by use of a code or cipher.

**ELINT** – Electronic Intelligence – Information obtained for intelligence purposes from the intercept of foreign electromagnetic noncommunications transmissions (by other than the intended recipient). The most common sources of this type of information are foreign radar signals.

**ELT** – The DIRNSA's Executive Leadership Team.

**FOIA** – The Freedom of Information Act.

**FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE** – Information relating to the capabilities, intentions, and activities of foreign powers, organizations or persons.

**HPSCI** – The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which provides oversight on NSA/CSS' intelligence activities.

**INTERCEPT** – The acquisition of electromagnetic signals such as radio or radar by using electronic equipment for the purpose of gathering intelligence information on foreign entities. The material collected is itself sometimes referred to as "intercept."

**IOB** – The President's Intelligence Oversight Board, which is charged with oversight of all U.S. foreign intelligence activities.

**JCS** – The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**MEPP** – NSA/CSS' Mathematics Education Partnership Program.

**OMB** – The President's Office of Management and Budget.

**OPSEC** – Operations Security – The process of denying potential adversaries any information about capabilities and/or intentions by identifying, controlling and protecting generally unclassified evidence of the planning and execution of sensitive activities.

**NSA/CSS** – The National Security Agency/Central Security Service.

**NSC** – The National Security Council.

**NSCID** – The National Security Council Intelligence Directive.

**SIGINT** – Signals Intelligence – Information which contains (either individually or in combination) communications intelligence (COMINT), electronics intelligence (ELINT), and foreign instrumentation signals intelligence (FISINT), however transmitted.

**SECDEF** – The United States Secretary of Defense.

**SSCI** – The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which provides oversight on NSA/CSS' intelligence activities.

**USA** – United States Army.

**USAF** – United States Air Force.

**USMC** – United States Marines Corps.

**USN** – United States Navy.

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