

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER JOSEPH E. RICHARD
US Army, Retired
Department of Army Civilian, Retired (Deceased)



Drafted in April of 1941, PVT Joseph Richard was sent to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. After completing a course in radio repair, he entered the Signal Intelligence School. In January of 1942, Tech-4 Richard became a member of the second small group of Cryptanalysts assigned to the Signal Intelligence Service, Washington, D.C., where he worked in the Traffic Analysis Section of the Japanese Army communications effort. In May he volunteered for overseas duty and was sent to Australia to work in GEN Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area Signal Intelligence Agency.

In January 1943, Tech-4 Richard requested from then MAJ Abraham Sinkov (HoF 1987), his direct superior, that he be allowed to analyze high-level Japanese Army traffic after duty-hours. With Sinkov's permission, Richard

worked independently and, in February 1943, he made a critical breakthrough in one of the Japanese high-level systems. First, he isolated a number of messages that belonged to a particular cipher system associated with the Japanese Army Water Transport System. He also discovered a critical piece of information about the mechanics of the cipher. This resulted in the discovery of the entire procedure which indicated what particular part of the cipher's book was used for each message. This led to the first break into the Japanese Army Water Transport System in April 1943. During three months of study and analysis, Tech-4 Richard completed the first decryption of the Water Transport Code material on 6 April 1943.

Arlington Hall Station and the Central Bureau immediately established divisions of labor to exploit the compromise, and by June 1943 Southwest Pacific ground, air, and naval headquarters were receiving translations of the code, which they in turn used for operational planning and targeting. The resulting success of reading messages provided high-level intelligence on ship movements, supply problems and strengths at various garrisons.

Tech-4 Richard's initial breakthrough opened the way to reading all of the Japanese Army's high-level radio messages. The methods he uncovered exposed vulnerabilities in higher level Japanese radio messages. The success with the Water Transport Code

fostered the confidence to persist in the intercept and the challenging work of solutions to the later systems. These were successfully achieved later in 1943. By mid-1944, all Japanese systems were being read in quantity, most completely by Arlington Hall (Washington) with Central Bureau (Australia) and the Wireless Experimental Center (India) reading messages concerning operations in their respective areas.

The intelligence derived from the reading of Japanese communications was credited by LTG Richard Sutherland, GEN MacArthur's Chief of Staff, with having chopped two years off the war in the Pacific. In the words of the Army Chief of Staff GEN George C. Marshall, "The heavy losses reported from time to time which they sustain by reason of our submarine action largely results from the fact that we know their sailing dates and the routes of their convoys and can notify our submarines to lie in wait at the proper point." For his accomplishment, Tech-4 Richard was promoted to Warrant Officer and received the Legion of Merit on 29 August 1944.

CWO Richard left the Army in 1946 and began work as a civilian for the Army Security Agency at Arlington Hall Station the same year. He became a member of the first National Security Agency (NSA) field support group in Frankfurt, West Germany in 1952. In 1963, he was the Assistant Chief of Station at NSA in Australia. Mr. Richard retired as a GS-15 in June 1973.

CWO Richard was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1993. He passed away on 8 April 2005.



CWO Joseph E. Richard's photo as it appeared on his War Department Identification Card, issued 2 June 1945.



Mr. Joseph Richard receives his Knowlton Award from COL (Ret) John Black during the 1993 Hall of Fame ceremonies.

Among other articles in his Hall of Fame file, is a photocopy of a hand-written note sent to CWO Richard on 6 April 1944 by Abraham Sinkov, who nominated him to the Hall of Fame. The text follows:

“Dear Joe,

I have just come from a big, joyful birthday party at Arlington Hall, the anniversary of “K.” One year ago today was when the fun started and we have certainly come a long way since. The history was described by [COL Soloman]Kullback [HoF 1988] and you will be pleased to know that you were mentioned as having made the first significant contribution. ...

Abe Sinkov”