

Intelligence Crests



OPERATIONS SOLID STATE PHASED ARRAY RADAR

Eye Spy takes a look at the fascinating world of intelligence crests, how they were created and the often misunderstood message contained within

Most intelligence and security services are visually represented by a unique crest, seal or logo. Look more closely and you will see the design contains certain objects, colour or symbols that reflect its function, origin and purpose. It's not unlike heraldry in fact, indeed, many crests are both suggestive and historic in that the design is more than just a visual blaze of colour, latin wording or crossed swords. The crest is a living creation. It's the same science behind a coat of arms, for example. Other crests carry initials, phrases or similar and include the date of when that service was created, or some other feature allied to its genesis.

Sometimes a crest will reflect culture, religion, political leanings etc. For example, the National Intelligence Agency of South Africa - NIA has recently chosen an "all seeing native tribal eye" as distinct and colourful as any of the local art from the great continent of Africa. The crest is seen as distinctive to Africa. It seems a world apart, for example, from the crest of the National Reconnaissance Office - NRO of the United States. The NRO is an agency heavily involved with intelligence gleaned electronically and visually, perhaps more accurately - it has an association with satellites. Its crest shows planet Earth and what could be interpreted as a satellite trajectory. The NRO is a spectacularly powerful agency, and three years ago a strange "visualisation crest" appeared. That showed a 'wise owl' in the dead of night and a statement - "*we own the night*". If this is an authentic crest - no-one from the NRO is saying!



Crest of South Africa's NIA



USA - NRO - one is an official crest - the other a visualisation

OWLS AND DOVES

Interestingly, owls feature on many crests, and besides being a recognised symbol of wisdom, it is also a symbol of vigilance. The Military Intelligence Service of Portugal - SIED and Belgium's Military Intelligence and Security Service - SGRS, have both selected this animal for inclusion on their service crests. Italy's Executive Committee for Intelligence and Security Services - CESIS decided they should show a dove against a pale blue backdrop. It's an interesting choice, for the organisation clearly wants its citizens to recognise that it is working for peace and prosperity.



SIED - Portugal

When a new service is established, designers and officials occasionally seek to incorporate relevant detail that allows people to understand the nature of its business. When America's Department of Homeland Security was created, a quite distinctive crest, or seal burst on to the scene.



CESIS -Italy

To our knowledge it wasn't officially sanctioned, but many intelligence enthusiasts were impressed. The designer had chosen a Masonic symbol - the all-seeing eye of god - a mystical distortion of the omniscient (all-knowing) Biblical God. Yet the eye is also seen as "providence in government". This design can still be found on the \$1 bill. It was apparently "too clever" for those in authority, and the crest was never used. Officials at the DHS opted for the bland design that now features on its many web sites. It was also rumoured the design was created for the US Defense

Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)- the central research and development organisation for the Department of Defense (DoD).



The Masonic "all seeing eye"

Like many intelligence and defence crests used in the United States, it does feature a bald eagle - the national symbol of America. The eagle is depicted

in various ways on several USA crests, including the Central Intelligence Agency. The eagle signifies a “man of action” occupied in “weighty affairs”. It also represents “one of a lofty spirit, ingenious, speedy in apprehension and judgement and in matters of ambiguity”. However, it could have been so very different for the CIA if one official had got his way - he wanted to use a turkey - but to the relief of the emerging US intelligence machine, he was outvoted.



North American Aerospace Command - NORAD is another agency that chose to use an eagle in its crest. Officials in this case simply used the wings of the bird - a symbol of swiftness and protection - to cover a map of North America, it was a clever decision. Since the establishment of NORAD on 12 May 1958, the NORAD emblem has been proudly displayed as a symbol of unity between the United States and Canada. The heraldic meaning of the emblem follows:



The blue background of the shield signifies the air; the turquoise waters on the globe denote the sea; the yellow continent indicates the land - the three environments in which any defence of the North American continent would take place.

The silver wings enfolding the globe in a protective manner, issuing from behind the globe and out of space, are symbolic of the armed forces and the might of NORAD.

The upward position of the sword pointing toward the northern skies represents the direction that is considered “the shortest approach of the potential aggressor”. With the advent of the asymmetric terrorist threat, it may also be said that the “sharp edges of the sword are prepared to meet any aggressor in North America’s domestic airspace.

An official NORAD image showing its facilities spaced across North America. Its crest represents fully the role of NORAD

With increasing accountability and a changing world, some services choose to make drastic changes to the appearance of their crests. None more so than Spain’s National Intelligence Centre - CNI. Its new crest is a world away from the ‘colonial’ design which featured for many years. The CNI has gone for the “modern look” - again incorporating part of the Earth to suggest an international agency. The crest contains government elements from its past adventures across the world.



CNI - Spain

CROWNS

Countries who still maintain a royal family or ‘monarch relationship’ or have past ties to royalty, such as Canada and New Zealand, often choose to use a crown within the design of their intelligence services’

British intelligence is not the only service to feature a crown on its crest



SIS -
New Zealand



SIS - Portugal



NSM -
Norway



SGRS - Belgium



GID -
Jordan



FE -
Denmark



PET - Denmark

crests. Denmark, Portugal, Jordan, Belgium Sweden, Croatia and of course, Great Britain continue to feature a crown. However, its not always that simple, Poland's Military Intelligence Service - WSI - use an eagle and a crown. The heraldic meaning of a crown signifies "royal or seigniorial authority".

Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6) uses the official Coat of Arms of the UK alongside modern letters 'SIS'. Inside the crest a shield supported by the Lion of England and by the Unicorn of Scotland. The lion being an animal of "deathless courage" and the imaginary unicorn of "extreme courage". The motto of the UK's crest reads 'Dieu et mon droit' - French for 'God and my right' and dates back to the reign of King Henry V - 1413-1422. The motto of the Order of the Garter reads 'honi soit qui mal y pense' - 'evil to him who thinks evil'.

A design did surface a few years ago that supposedly "represented" MI6. It was rather bizarre and showed a brain encased in a letter 'C' after Mansfield Cumming - its creator and first head. This too was 'topped off' with a crown. It's highly unlikely this is an authentic crest, but many would argue it is far more visible than the current SIS logo and an indicator that the service deals strictly with matters of intelligence.

MI5's crest is also interesting and contains an 'authentic' history lesson for intelligence enthusiasts. At the centre of the crest, which was approved by the Garter, Principal King of Arms in 1981, is a golden

The Central Intelligence Agency Seal

The seal is created in the colours of America's national flag, red, white and blue, and also has an accent of gold.



The Eagle: The bald eagle is the national bird of the United States of America. When the USA was being established, Benjamin Franklin, one of its founding fathers and a signature on the Declaration of Independence, wished the national bird to be the wild turkey. Mr Franklin believed the turkey was a good choice as it provided food for the early settlers. He also thought that the turkey looked noble. However, Mr Franklin was outvoted by the other members of the Continental Congress who felt that the eagle symbolised strength and alertness and that it would look much better as a national symbol.

The Compass: The compass or star, as some call it, has sixteen points on it. These points show the agency's search for intelligence data all over the world outside the United States and bringing it all back home to CIA headquarters in Virginia to analyse, write a report on, and then pass on to the policy makers. The compass rests upon a shield which is a symbol for defence. The intelligence gathered by the CIA is in defence of the United States of America.

winged sea lion on a blue background which represents MI5's historical association with the three UK armed services. The colour blue signifies its overseas ties. Surrounding this central emblem are three further symbols: a green cinquefoil, a portcullis and a red rose. The cinquefoil's five petals allude to the '5' in MI5, and the colour green has been associated with intelligence since the First World War.

The portcullis, traditionally a symbol of Britain's parliament, relates to MI5's function of upholding parliamentary democracy, and the crown over the top of the portcullis at the top of the crest refers to the Service's status as crown servants. The rose has historical associations with secrecy - Sir Francis Walsingham, head of Elizabeth I's 'secret service', used it on his seal, for example. At the bottom of the crest is MI5's motto: 'Regnum Defende', meaning 'Defend the Realm'.



MI5 - United Kingdom



MI5 crest? Its exact origins are unknown

Like the 'open brain' unauthorised crest of MI6, a baffling MI5 crest appeared a few years ago. This was unique in that it was triangular in shape and had M-I-V letters in each corner. It's doubtful this ever was an official crest - but who knows?

In the UK, a crown or coat of arms is found in numerous government and military crests. Britain's massive Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) early crest was 'topped' by a crown. When the organisation moved into its new stylish headquarters a few years ago, senior officials changed the design greatly to reflect a modern and dynamic establishment. However, the crown was still included - a duty in the defence of the realm. Many persons believe the new crest is representative of the changing world of intelligence, though the old crest is still favoured by many.



GCHQ - the old crest - (top) was replaced by a new design

The official coat of arms of the British Government is used by MI6



Buckingham Palace

For colour and imagination don't stray too far away from South America (though we would omit Chile here!)

Nations in this region also choose to use government symbols, but occasionally include vibrant national colours.

Argentina's Intelligence Secretariat - SIDE - crest is particularly impressive. The hands are symbols of faith, sincerity and justice.



SIDE - Argentina

Not to be outdone Brazil's primary intelligence agency - ABIN - has also come up with a spectacular design. Unfortunately, Chile's National Intelligence Directorate - NID (DINA) crest can be



ABIN - Brazil

viewed in a number of ways. It's a 'grasped iron fist' taken straight from a medieval suit of armour. Clearly its intent is to show strength, but the hand also signifies faith, sincerity and justice, moreover, its ancient definition shows a person with qualities of leadership. The same iron-clad fist appears on the crest of the United States Strategic Command - USSC. This crest also shows flashes of lightning - meaning effecting weighty business with great clarity of force.

CROSSED SWORDS AND DAGGERS

Perhaps one of the world's most famous intelligence crests was that once used by the now defunct State Security Committee - better known as the Soviet Union's KGB.



When communism collapsed in the USSR, so too did the hammer and sickle motif used in the KGB crest (left). The FSB retained the shield and sword

However, Russia's Federal Security Service (which superseded the KGB following the collapse of communism) decided to keep many aspects of the original crest. The shield and sword/dagger design remains, but the communist hammer and sickle are gone. The sword/dagger signifies justice and honour, while the shield is a symbol of defence. East Germany's infamous Ministry for State Security (defunct) - STASI - "partners in crime" with the KGB - chose a compass as its crest centre piece. It's an interesting choice for the compass and the T-square represents movement or direction - often towards perfection.



NID - Chile

USSC - USA



STASI - East Germany



SUPO - Finland

MUST - Sweden

Interpol

Ministry of Defence - United Kingdom

Swords and blades can be found on crests in every corner of the world. Russia's near neighbours Finland and its Security Police - SUPO use a wide short stubby sword as its main logo, though it incorporates a lion's head... and a crown. Interestingly, all former Warsaw Pact countries have removed many communist symbols of their former past. Other users of the sword are Interpol, Sweden's Military Intelligence and Security Service - MUST and Hungary's National Security Office NBH. Interpol also use a set of scales to reflect justice. Britain's Ministry of Defence crest combines two

crossed swords with an anchor and a bird to depict all three primary armed forces. Crossed swords represents a pursuit of "just and honour" during conflict.

The theme of crossed swords features on the crest of the General Intelligence Department of Jordan - GID, Belgium's Military Intelligence and Security Service - SGRS.

ANIMALS AND KEYS

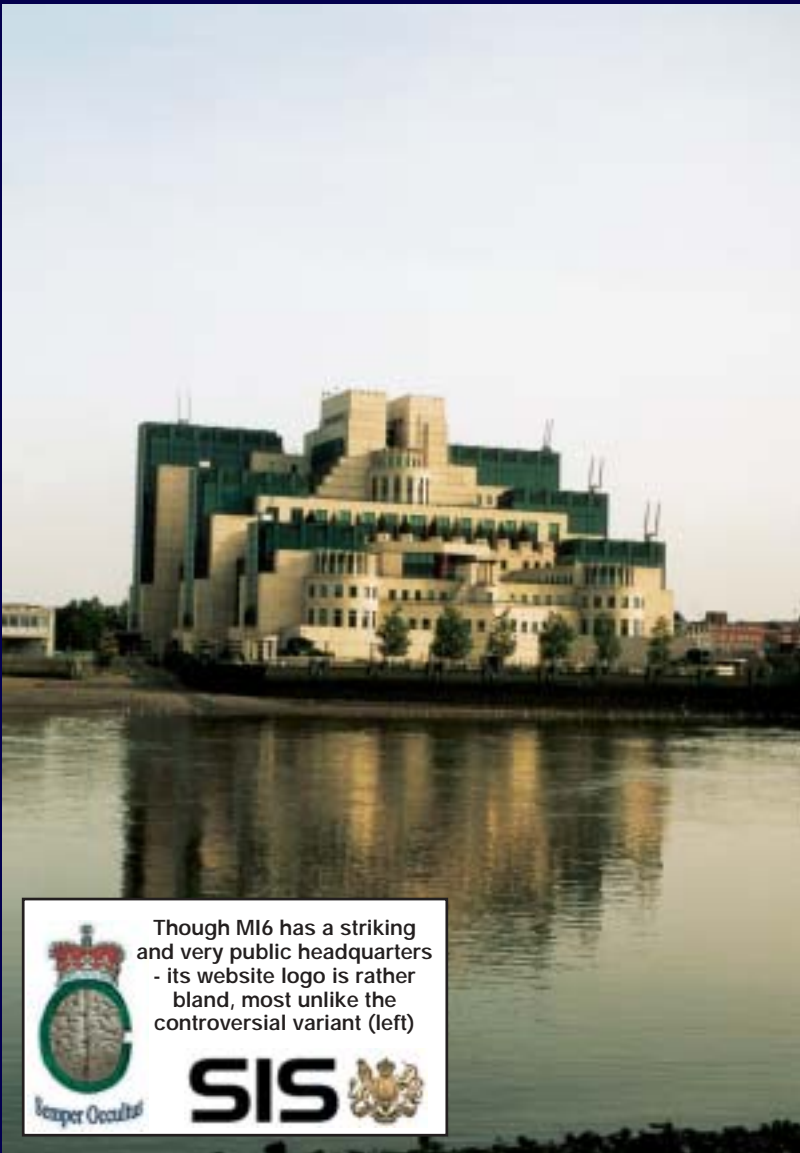
Animals are a particular favourite with the intelligence services, though some incorporate a few puzzling varieties. However, we are certain they are all significant and have an authentic reason for inclusion. Mongolia's General Intelligence Agency - GIA crest shows a flying winged horse - perhaps Pegasus - "exceeding activity and energy of mind". However, horses reflect a readiness for "all employments for king and country" and we have been unable to determine which, if any, is the correct interpretation. Holland's Central



RAW - India

GIA - Mongolia

AIVD - Holland



Though MI6 has a striking and very public headquarters - its website logo is rather bland, most unlike the controversial variant (left)



SIS 

Intelligence and Security Service - AIVD crest depicts three fish. India's intelligence agency - Research and Analysis Wing India - RAW features an elephant - noted for its "courage and strength".

Romania's primary intelligence agency - Foreign Intelligence Service Romania - SIE has also chosen an animal as its main theme. The SIE's clever design incorporates a key - for guardianship and dominion - and interestingly, a cross. It's one of the world's only Western crests to maintain, what at first appears to be a religious object. However, a cross also means military honour, or the "mutual converse of human society" and a reflection of "difficulties encountered". As for the animal, observers insist it is an eagle - sporting a dragon's tail! Others



SIE - Romania



GRU - Russia

believe it is derived from a cock - a symbol of courage and perseverance - an "able man in politics". The design is mimicked by Estonia's Security Police Board - ESPB. Estonia's eagle is holding a shield and contained within that - three lions. Russia's Main Intelligence Administration - GRU features an image of a black bat - a symbol that shows awareness of the powers of darkness and chaos. The bat is an intimidating heraldic



ESPB - Estonia

symbol used to inspire fear in enemies. The GRU shows the bat with wings open and facing the observer.

KEYS

Four other significant US government agency crests feature a key: Central Security Service - CSS, Army Intelligence, Air Intelligence Agency - AIA and by far the most important, the National Security Agency. In



CSS - USA

AIA - USA

AI - USA

NSA - USA



When the UK's GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) moved from its old headquarters (top) to a new modern building, it also created a new crest - disliked by many



Security Service. Its crest shows a burning red torch and is topped by a castle - a symbol of safety.

The most famous crest to carry a torch is that of the United States' enormous Defense Intelligence Agency - DIA. The initial letters of the Defense Intelligence Agency 'DIA' also comprise the Greek word "dia", which means divided into two parts. In this instance, the flaming torch and its gold colour represent knowledge, i.e., intelligence, "lighting" the way of the "known" light blue-green world against the darkness or unknown symbolised by the dark background - "the area of the truth" still sought by the worldwide mission of the service. The two red atomic ellipses symbolize the scientific and technical aspects of intelligence today and of the future.

this case the eagle holds the key in its feet during flight. Romania's Foreign Intelligence Service - CSS crest features a long-tailed eagle grasping not one, but two keys.

TORCHES AND BEACONS

Torches or beacons are symbols that feature on the crests of several intelligence and security services. Germany's Military Intelligence Service - MAD - has a burning torch pictured behind a shield portraying the national eagle. Its design is similar to Lithuania's Special Investigation Service - STT, in this case the eagle is actually carrying the torch. Greece's National Intelligence Service - NIS crest shows a hand grasping a lighted torch in front of a graphic of the planet.

In the news of late for involvement in the CIA's Milan kidnap of a terrorist suspect is SISMi - Italy's Military and Intelligence



THE MAKING OF A CREST

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE CREST CSIS

The CSIS crest rests on a background of pale silver surrounded by a blue palisade, edged with gold; a red maple leaf is centred in the palisade. The royal crown sits atop the crest.

Significance: The blue and gold tinctures provide the historical links with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police which, prior to the creation of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service on 16 July 1984, was responsible for security intelligence activities throughout Canada. The style of palisade alludes to a structure used as a defensive measure and, in this instance with its four larger points, draws attention to the major areas of security operations for which CSIS has been given responsibility under the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. The maple leaf on the white field may be traced to the flag of Canada where the maple leaf is described as being on a Canadian pale.



The 13 stars and the wreath are adopted from the Department of Defense (DoD) crest. Any intelligence service carrying such an object is effectively revealing its primary operational role - "watchful and signalling warnings in times of danger".



DIA - USA

ANCHORS

Anchors appear on a number of intelligence crests, and not surprisingly have a connection to defence, in particularly naval services. The UK's MOD has a prominent anchor in its crest, while the US Office of Naval Intelligence - ONI uses an anchor beneath an eagle perched on the Earth. Greece's Ministry of Defence crest also incorporates an anchor - the symbol of hope and steadfastness.



MOD - GREECE

ONI - USA

LEGENDS AND MYTHS

One badge which is unique to the United States belongs to the US Secret Service, and its genesis can be traced back to Britain (according to some sources) over a thousand years ago. However, even without the legend its 'modern' routes mean it is easily the oldest government crest in the country. The Secret Service Division was created on 5 July 1865 in Washington, D.C., to suppress counterfeit currency. The badge was first produced in 1875. The five-pointed star, if drawn with points of equal length and angles of 36° at each point, is sometimes termed a golden five pointed star. If the colinear edges are joined together a pentagram is produced, which is the simplest of the unicursal star polygons, and a symbol of mystical and magical significance.

The golden five-pointed star is a very common ideogram in the western world, and has particularly strong associations with military power and war. Many communist countries (such as China and Vietnam) also incorporate five-pointed stars.

Hungary's National Security Office - NBH crest is unique in that it is based on legend, or to be precise, a mythical bird that resembles an eagle called the Turul.

The Turul (Lanneret), means much more to Hungarians than a motif found in folk tales, folk art and archaeological findings. It is the main character of the Hungarians' legend of origin and leads to the world of totem animals. The motif means forefather and symbolises the existence of the nation. The so-called "falcon teeth", which can be seen on the beak, reportedly shows the difference between an eagle and a lanneret. The falcon-like lanneret has been described as a hunting bird - "not a bird of prey" as the government of Hungary insists!



US Secret Service officers and a British police officer at Downing Street



NBH - Hungary

The lanneret is mounted on the coat of arms, while the shield is horizontally divided into an even number of silver (or white) and red stripes, which follow the pattern of the coat of arms of the republic. The lanneret is holding a sword in its beak, which is believed to be King St. Stephen's sword. The wings of the bird are held open to indicate an upward motion. Its claws and beak follow the natural proportions of the lanneret. The slightly ruffled feathers on its neck show its readiness to act, which symbolises the traditions of St. Stephen, who was the founder of the Hungarian state, always ready to fight for its protection.

The crest is strengthened by the motto on the coat of arms: "Motherland above all". This is a line from a poem by the author of the lyrics of the Hungarian national anthem, Ferenc Kölcsey. The detail and construction of the NBH crest must surely make it one of the world's most unusual service crests.



Mustafa Kemal Ataturk

Another crest to feature a mythical subject is the RAF's Intelligence School. At the centre of its crest is a Sphinx - which symbolises "omniscience and secrecy".



RAF Intelligence School

Yet perhaps *the most impressive* and carefully created of all the world's intelligence crests is that of Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation - MIT. It is a stunning collection of historical events "clamped" together to portray an organisation and nation that is the gateway to the West and Middle East. And to our knowledge, it is the only crest to feature an individual's face.

The National Intelligence Organisation was established upon the directives given by the 'Great Leader' Mustafa Kemal Ataturk [Atatürk] (1881-1938) in 1925. "We have to establish a modern intelligence organisation as is the case in contemporary states, said Ataturk. Since then, the service has evolved constantly and is thoroughly respected by other intelligence agencies.

The MIT crest is a composite of five primary features. In the centre is a photograph of Ataturk. This represents the loyalty of the MIT to the principles and reforms of Ataturk. In heraldic law, using a face also represents honour.

At the top of the crest behind Ataturk an image shows Turkey on the world (above), this is to announce that the country is a world state and that the world as a whole is within the field of interest of the MIT. Sixteen stars surround 'Turkey on the world' and represent the independent Turkish states established throughout history. At the lower base of the crest, Sun beams stretch to the stars. The Sun represents the Republic of Turkey; the beams virtues inherited by the country from the past and the link it has established with history. The crescent star reflects Turkey's independence, national



MIT - TURKEY

integrity and unity. The laurel foliage (above) represents “peace at home and peace in the world” that Ataturk designated for the people of the Republic of Turkey.

Each intelligence crest is as individual and unique as the service it represents. Most are created in a manner that portrays intelligence, strength and respect. Others evolve or change, but modernising agencies does not necessarily mean the crest should be tampered with. Some international agencies are reluctant to reveal their crest, seal or logo, and that’s not altogether surprising. A crest can be read and evaluated like any other information or photograph. It’s also a clue to their existence!

EYE SPY’S INTELLIGENCE CRESTS POSTER

Eye Spy has produced this giant A2 poster (23 x 17 inch) showing nearly 100 of the world’s most famous and not so well-known intelligence crests. Each poster is produced on high quality 200gm white gloss paper and is suitable for framing. All posters are forwarded in a sturdy tube to avoid creasing. Eye Spy readers can obtain their posters at a discounted rate.

Subscribers:

UK £4.99 USA \$10.00
Europe/ROW £7.99
(All inclusive)

Non subscribers

UK £4.99 + £2.50 p & p
Non subscribers
USA \$10.00 + \$3.00 shipping
Non subscribers
ROW £6.99 + £2.50 p & p

