Office of Special Projects: Protecting the Navy's Nuclear Superiority from Spies



Tugboats guide USS Minnesota (SSN783) to the pier as the Virginia-class nuclear-powered fast-attack submarine returns to Naval Submarine Base New London in Gorton, Connecticut, following a regularly scheduled deployment in November 2021. From U.S. Fleet Forces Command

WASHINGTON – When it comes to protecting the Department of the Navy's secrets, no one is better equipped than the NCIS Office of Special Projects (OSP), the Navy's elite counterespionage unit.

Comprised of Special Agents, intelligence professionals, technical and financial experts, and the NCIS Special Surveillance Team, OSP can respond globally to threats targeting Navy and Marine Corps information, personnel, and installations.

Leveraging cutting-edge investigative techniques and strong intelligence cooperation—underpinned by the Navy's growing prosecutorial strength in national security matters—OSP rapidly converts information into action, minimizing losses and mitigating risks to the Navy's superiority. These advanced capabilities, combined with NCIS's unique counterintelligence and law enforcement authority, make OSP the Department of War's preeminent weapon against adversarial intelligence services and insider threats.

OSP's strong partnerships with federal law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, also serve as an investigative force multiplier for cases involving civilian subjects outside the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

One such case—the investigation of Jonathan and Dianna Toebbe—illustrates the power of this collaboration.

In 2021, Jonathan Toebbe, aided by his wife, Dianna, attempted to sell highly sensitive information on the U.S. Navy's nuclear propulsion program. As a civilian nuclear engineer for the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, Jonathan had access to restricted data detailing military-sensitive design elements, operating parameters, and performance characteristics of reactors for nuclear-powered warships.

NCIS and the FBI launched a counterintelligence investigation after Jonathan sent a package containing restricted data and instructions for establishing a covert relationship—along with an offer to provide more information in exchange for cryptocurrency—to an individual whom he believed represented a foreign government. He later attempted to contact the perceived foreign representative using encrypted email. In reality, he was communicating with an undercover agent.

Over several months, Jonathan exchanged messages with the undercover agent and agreed to provide additional restricted

data in return for thousands of dollars in cryptocurrency.

Between June and August 2021, he completed two “dead drops,” delivering encrypted SD cards and receiving $100,000 in cryptocurrency. A review of the cards confirmed they contained restricted data related to Navy submarine reactors. Both Jonathan and Dianna were arrested on Oct. 9, 2021, while attempting to deliver a third SD card.

On Nov. 9, 2022, Jonathan was sentenced to more than 19 years in prison. Dianna received a sentence of more than 21 years.

“The Office of Special Projects continues to innovate to rapidly and aggressively meet adversarial threats to the Department of the Navy,” said OSP Special Agent in Charge James Allen. “Through the development and enhancement of organic capabilities, and by strategically leveraging unique partnerships, OSP remains committed to preserving warfighting superiority and enhancing the lethality of the Department of War.”

OSP specializes in conducting national security and counterintelligence investigations on behalf of the Department of the Navy. Working alongside federal partners as force multipliers, OSP identifies and disrupts threats to critical DON personnel, programs, and technologies.