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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY  
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND

Serial: N-1735-A  
11 June 1961

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THRU: General Graves B. Erskine  
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense  
Special Operations

SUBJECT: William Hyter Covington; Missing Persons Investigation (U)

## I. Background

William H. Covington was born 10 April 1933 at Bowling Green, Virginia. He was one of five children. His father has a history of drinking and arrests which led to a divorce from Covington's mother in 1945. Covington has received no education beyond the high school level. He has been married since January 1956. His wife, Jean Steele Covington, is seven years older than he. They have two children.

Covington saw military duty from September 1952 to September 1955 in the Army Security Agency. His duty included assignment to Vint Hill Farms Station, Warrenton, Virginia. Upon completion of military service he applied for employment at the National Security Agency and was employed effective 10 January 1956. Based upon nonderogatory background investigations in 1952 and 1956, Covington was issued Full Clearance on 19 November 1956. During his service at NSA he has served approximately two years in Japan and Korea and six months in Berlin, Germany. He is considered to be professionally competent and personally likeable by co-workers and superiors. He has an excellent work record with no evidence of leave abuse or previous misconduct of any sort, domestically or abroad. On 16 March 1961 Covington first made known to the Office of Security Services information indicating a serious problem of personal indebtedness. This information was referred to the Office of Personnel Services, NSA, for appropriate handling. Before action could be taken, however, Covington entered on an extended period of sick leave for the purpose of having a hemorrhoidectomy. During this period his wife also gave birth to their second child. Covington did not return to duty until 31 May 1961. He worked for two days and then requested additional sick leave for the purpose of having a cyst removed from his neck. He was scheduled to return to duty on Monday, June 5, 1961. On that date he notified his office that because of physical discomfort resulting from the removal

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of the cyst from his neck he would not report for work. He similarly notified his office on Tuesday, June 6. During this period, his sick leave having been exhausted, he was granted annual leave.

On Wednesday, June 7, no word was received from Covington. His superiors again placed him on annual leave, assuming that he was still recuperating from the cyst operation.

At 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7, Covington's wife contacted a neighbor, also employed at NSA, and reported that Covington had left home at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, June 6, purportedly to go to work, and had never returned. This employee, who did not work in the same area as Covington, personally undertook a search of restaurants and bars in the vicinity of Covington's home on the evening of June 7. His efforts met with negative results. At 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 8, Covington having not returned home or to his office, the employee notified Covington's supervisor of the telephone call received the previous evening from Mrs. Covington. The supervisor immediately notified the Office of Security Services.

## II. Investigative Steps Taken to Locate Covington

A close contact has been established with Covington's wife and she has been repeatedly interviewed for all possible information which might throw light on her husband's whereabouts. Arrangements have been made for immediate notification of this Agency should she receive any word from her husband.

All of Covington's relatives in the Continental United States have been located and contacted and have been requested to notify NSA immediately upon receipt of any information concerning Covington or his whereabouts.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has been apprised of the situation and have placed a stop notice in their indices to alert their personnel to any information which might come to them through FBI sources. They have also conducted a re-check of their records and have determined that they have no information concerning Covington other than the fact that he is an NSA employee.

An All Points Missing Person General Alarm Bulletin has been issued through the Maryland State Police, effecting a 13 state alert. Through these facilities a full description of Covington and his vehicle has been circulated.

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Extensive interviews of co-workers and professional associates have been completed and are continuing for information concerning Covington's interests and activities and for knowledge of his possible whereabouts. All personal references listed in official forms on file with this Agency have been contacted and requested to be alert for information concerning Covington.

Extensive investigation has been conducted and is continuing to identify and contact all persons outside of NSA who might have any knowledge of Covington or his possible whereabouts.

Efforts are continuing to alert all public transportation facilities. Airlines and bus terminals have been provided with descriptive information and have been requested to notify this Agency immediately should Covington attempt to purchase tickets. Searches of airline ticketing records have been and are being conducted on the possibility that Covington may already have left the area.

Because of information indicating that Covington has become addicted to horse racing and is known to have visited the Charles Town, West Virginia, race track on June 6, a two-day search has been conducted at that track and in that vicinity. All police facilities in Charles Town, Harpers Ferry, and the State of West Virginia, have been alerted to be on the lookout for Covington or his automobile. Similar arrangements have been made with local police as well as State Police in the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia, where Covington's mother and other relatives and former associates reside.

A continuous surveillance of Covington's residence is being maintained. Surveillance is also continuing on the known and possible haunts in which Covington has been previously seen or might possibly be seen.

Morgues and hospitals have been and are being checked on the possibility that Covington may have had some mishap. Hotels and motels in the metropolitan Washington and Baltimore areas are being checked for evidence of registration during this period.

With the opening of business on 12 June 1961, the Passport Division, Department of State will be checked for evidence of passport issuance to Covington and will be requested to notify NSA immediately of any attempt by Covington to obtain a passport. The Central Intelligence Agency, which has already been notified of the situation, will be requested to render any possible assistance through their facilities in maintaining an alert on Covington should he leave the United States.

All reported sightings of Covington are being investigated promptly and developed as possible.

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### III. Results to Date

Covington has not yet been found. It has been learned that, largely because of a developing addiction to gambling, Covington has become so deeply indebted that his wife has taken over management of their finances. He has never been known to be unaccountably away from home before. There is no evidence of marital discord or extra-marital activity. There is no indication of any subversive interests or connections on the part of Covington. He has, however, unknown to his wife, become quite involved with a low element of people including a person believed to be deeply involved in a variety of unsavory activities. Covington frequents a Laurel pool hall and a low grade hotel where the poorest type of gambling and race track devotees congregate.

Covington has been seen in the Washington-Baltimore area since he left home. He is known to have attended the races in Charles Town on June 6. Persons who made the rounds of Washington bars with Covington the evening of June 6 and in the early morning hours of June 7 have been interviewed. He has been reportedly seen in a bar and an all night restaurant in the Laurel, Maryland, area as recently as June 8 or 9. A reported sighting in Baltimore is now being pursued.

When Covington left home he took with him only the clothes he was wearing and the family car. His wife believed him to have only \$3.00 in cash. She is unaware that he failed to deposit \$150.00 cash in the bank on Friday, June 2, as he had promised. On Monday night, June 5, he engaged in a lengthy billiard contest in Laurel, Maryland, and may have lost considerable money. On Tuesday, June 6, he won \$63.00 on the daily double at Charles Town, and perhaps more. On Tuesday night he boasted to friends that he had "hit it big." His resources are, however, limited. He has no gasoline credit card but may have a Giant Food Store Courtesy Card, which would enable him to cash checks. The few leads presently existing do not indicate that he has left this part of the country.

Suicide is a possibility, but no reports of despondency or emotional stress are reported. His doctor reports him to be in excellent health despite recent surgery. He has not added to his life insurance, which is modest. His conduct thus far follows a pattern of pleasure seeking and escape from responsibility. Financial desperation, however, could cause desperate measures.

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CPS  
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M/R: Report to General Erskine and SecDEF on W. H. Covington.



E. P. MALLOY/DIR/CPS/3574/jc