(U) How I Spent My Summer Vacation

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(U//FOUO) Note from SIGINT Communications: here is one intern's perspective on spending a summer working at NSA...

(U) Forget the CIA! This was my thought after attending a career fair in October 2003 and barely being given the time of day by a CIA representative. After waiting for the better portion of an hour to talk to the rep about summer internship opportunities, I walked away having had only a thirty-second conversation and with the image of my resume being tossed into a box.

(U) If the CIA couldn't spare a few minutes for a conversation, I would just have to ply my skills elsewhere... Nine months later, were I to meet that representative again, I would buy him dinner for blowing me off that day.

(U) Irritated by my useless trip to the career fair, I went looking online for summer opportunities. With a background in computer science and mathematics, I knew one institution that might offer me a position was the NSA. At that point, I knew that the NSA was a secretive government agency that utilized the work of mathematicians to "make and break codes." Upon reading of the **Director's Summer Program** (DSP) and its summer research positions for college students, I decided to put in an application. After the long clearance process, and surviving a few cuts, I was offered a spot in the DSP.

(U) So here I am, a summer intern at the NSA. I've found the experience offered by the past two months to be one of the most exciting and enriching of my entire life. Though I've done research throughout my time at Lafayette College, none of the problems I've worked on have possessed the importance of those I've seen in the DSP. The fact that the work I do in the DSP could possibly help our nation save lives is both sobering and fulfilling. The opportunity to work here means that I no longer have to sit by while events unfold across the globe. Instead, in the DSP, I have the chance to make a contribution to the safety of our nation. It's an incredible responsibility, but one that every person at the NSA has chosen to take on, and I am proud to share that responsibility, even if only for a summer.

(U) At the end of my term here, I'll have learned math, made friends, and made a contribution to something important, maybe even something that will save lives down the road. I've taken the skills I've learned during my research at Lafayette and applied them to real-world problems with important solutions. I'll take back to Lafayette new skills, knowledge, and confidence in my ability to be a contributing member of a team.

(U//FOUO) Read more about the Director's Summer Program in [today's edition of NSA Daily](). Also, for insights from an intelligence analysis summer intern, see [the recent SIDtoday story]().

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