



THE STORY HIDDEN INSIDE THE NAME

MORE THAN A NAME

The Hidden Architecture of the Order of the Sword & Shield

A brief historical and symbolic guide to the design thinking, intelligence-history references, symbolic layers, and historical connections built into the identity of OSSNHS.

Built for fields that were still becoming fields.

OSSNHS was founded in 2010 at St. John's University during a period when homeland security and its related academic disciplines were developing rapidly. Colleges and universities were creating programs in homeland security, intelligence, emergency management, cybersecurity, protective security, and other emerging areas - but many of those students had no national honor society aligned specifically with what they were studying.

The Society was created to meet that need. Rather than placing these students under the umbrella of an unrelated discipline, OSSNHS offered academic recognition connected directly to the subject matter, responsibilities, and professions they were preparing to enter.

That same idea still shapes the Society today: recognize excellence within the modern fields of **Homeland Security and Defense**, while leaving room for the disciplines themselves to continue evolving.

2010

Order of the Sword & Shield is established at St. John's University in New York.

2011

The Society inducts its first members and begins building its academic identity.

2013

Adelphi University becomes the first expansion chapter beyond the founding institution.

Recognition should fit the field.

That simple idea shaped the Society - and it also shaped the name.

The name was designed in layers.

OSS

The three letters work three different ways. Each layer stands on its own. Together, they create a historical reference that becomes visible only when someone looks a little closer.

OSS

Order of the Sword & Shield

The English name carries the Society's core symbolism: protection, readiness, service, and responsibility.

OΣΣ

Omicron Sigma Sigma

The Greek designation preserves the same three-letter identity while placing it naturally within the collegiate honor-society tradition.

OSS

Office of Strategic Services

For students of intelligence history, the initials also echo the World War II Office of Strategic Services - America's first centralized intelligence agency and the best-known institutional forerunner of the CIA.

The point is not affiliation. The reference is historical and intellectual: an intentional nod to the development of modern American intelligence, embedded quietly inside the identity of an academic honor society.

WHY THE THREE-LETTER STRUCTURE MATTERS

The three meanings were never intended to compete with one another. The Order of the Sword & Shield is the Society's formal name; Omicron Sigma Sigma places that identity naturally within the collegiate honor-society tradition; and the OSS initials add a historical reference recognizable to students of intelligence and national security. The structure works on more than one level without requiring any of those references to be understood in order to understand the Society itself.

That distinction matters. The Office of Strategic Services connection is a historical echo, not a claim of institutional lineage, governmental affiliation, or continuation.

The sword and the shield carry a second history.

THE SHIELD



Protection. Defense. Resilience. Continuity.
The safeguarding of people, institutions, infrastructure, and communities.

It reflects the protective side of homeland security: preparedness, emergency management, critical infrastructure, cyber defense, public safety, and continuity.

THE SWORD



Readiness. Resolve. Capability. Action when protection alone is not enough.

It reflects intelligence, counterterrorism, defense, strategic studies, national security, and the responsibility to confront threats when necessary.

A less obvious intelligence-history connection

In the Soviet state-security tradition, the **shield and sword** became enduring symbols of the security and intelligence apparatus. The Cheka, established in 1917 and followed through later organizations by the KGB, used the shield to represent defense of the state and the sword to represent action against its adversaries.

The imagery is not uniquely Soviet - sword-and-shield symbolism is much older - but within intelligence history the association is unmistakable to those who know where to look.

WHY THE SYMBOLISM WORKS

Sword-and-shield imagery long predates modern intelligence organizations and appears across military, civic, heraldic, and protective traditions. Within the Society, the meaning is deliberately broader: the shield represents protection, resilience, and continuity; the sword represents readiness, resolve, and the ability to act when action is required.

The association with Soviet state-security history adds another recognizable reference for those familiar with the field, but it does not define the imagery or suggest endorsement of the institutions that used it.

An East-West intelligence-history echo.

Taken together, the initials and the imagery quietly reference two major intelligence traditions that helped shape the twentieth-century national-security system.

AMERICAN LINEAGE

OSS

Office of Strategic Services
Strategic intelligence, analysis,
covert action, and special
operations during World War II.

ACADEMIC IDENTITY

OSSNHS

A modern honor society for
Homeland Security and
Defense.

SOVIET SECURITY TRADITION

SWORD & SHIELD

A historic symbol of the Cheka/
KGB state-security tradition:
protection and action.

The strength of the design is that the name does not depend on knowing any of this. It works first as an honor-society name. The additional layers appear only when someone looks deeper.

A Society for people trained to notice layers.

Analysis, context, history, pattern recognition, and the ability to see what others may overlook are central to many of the fields OSSNHS serves. The name was built with the same instinct.

CONTEXT MATTERS

The American and Soviet references are not presented as equivalent institutions or traditions. They belong to very different historical, political, and ethical contexts. Their role here is narrower: each contributed recognizable language and symbolism to the study of intelligence and security. The Society's identity draws on those historical associations while remaining explicitly academic, independent, and centered on knowledge, ethics, and professional responsibility.

Then the motto changes the meaning of everything.

Ex Scientia Pax

Out of Knowledge Comes Peace

After all the imagery of intelligence, defense, readiness, and security, the Society does not end with force. It ends with **knowledge** and **peace**.

The sword and shield become instruments of responsibility rather than symbols of power for its own sake. Education, judgment, ethics, and professional competence are what determine how those tools should be understood and used.

Ethics

Act with integrity and respect the responsibilities that accompany positions of trust.

Excellence

Pursue high standards in scholarship, service, leadership, and professional conduct.

Knowledge

Continue learning, questioning, analyzing, and improving throughout academic and professional life.

Peace

Apply knowledge and service toward protection, resilience, safety, and the well-being of society.

The sword is capability. The shield is protection.
Knowledge is the guide. Peace is the end.

Homeland Security and Defense

The same design philosophy carries into the Society's academic scope. OSSNHS serves a broad family of disciplines tied to security, preparedness, intelligence, protection, strategy, and defense.

Homeland Security & Related Fields

- Homeland Security
- Emergency & Disaster Management
- Intelligence & National Security
- Cybersecurity & Information Security
- Protective & Physical Security
- Critical Infrastructure & Resilience
- Public Safety
- Security-focused Criminal Justice

Defense & Strategic Fields

- Defense Studies
- Strategic Studies
- Military Studies
- Defense Policy & Analysis
- International Security
- Strategic & Military Intelligence
- Cyber Defense & Information Warfare
- Maritime, Space & Emerging Security Studies

One Society, many disciplines. Academic programs do not have to share the same title to share the same mission. OSSNHS was designed from the beginning to recognize excellence across fields that contribute to protecting people, institutions, communities, and nations.



Designed to reward those who look deeper.

Order of the Sword & Shield National Honor Society

Omicron Sigma Sigma

Homeland Security and Defense

Ex Scientia Pax

Out of Knowledge Comes Peace

SecurityHonorSociety.org

Historical note: The intelligence-history references described in this brochure are symbolic and educational. OSSNHS is an independent academic and professional honor society and is not affiliated with the former Office of Strategic Services, the Central Intelligence Agency, the KGB, or any governmental intelligence or security service.

Historical references: Central Intelligence Agency, *The Office of Strategic Services: America's First Intelligence Agency* and CIA History; UK Government History, *Formation of the Cheka, the First Soviet Security and Intelligence Agency*; Order of the Sword & Shield National Honor Society, official Society history.