Hoover - wiretapping

Computers and Automation, p. 19 Jan 72

Computers and Dossiers

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Originally published in "Texas Law Review," May 71

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Hoover's Version of "Approval in Writing"

Regardless of the state of the law or of the current content of executive directives, FBI Director Hoover has annually since 1965 assured the House Appropriations Committee that every wire tap undertaken by the FBI has been "approved in advance in writing by the Attorney General," and that all taps were limited to "national security" or "internal security" cases. But less than two months after Hoover gave that testimony in 1969, an FBI agent testified, during the trial of Cassius Clay under the Selective Service Act, that the FBI had tapped the wires of Martin Luther King, Jr. for four years before his death in 1968. Hoover then produced his version of an "approval in writing in advance by the Attorney General" -- a memorandum written by one of Hoover's own subordinates, reciting that in 1963 Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy, now also deceased, had inquired "if it was feasible to use electronic devices" to check into allegations that Dr. King "had Marxist leanings." The House Appropriations Committee found no reason to question Hoover's credibility when he appeared before it the following year and again testified that "all" wire taps "were authorized in advance in writing by the Attorney General."

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