

When Uncle Sam's Army Watched You

by Lloyd Shearer

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Almost anyone who has pulled time in military intelligence will testify that the intelligence branch of the U.S. Army is not necessarily peopled by the most intelligent persons in the service. Quite frequently the opposite holds true.

A classic example is the Army surveillance of political and private persons from 1967 to 1970.

During the Lyndon Johnson Administration the Army was charged with keeping tabs on riots and other civilian disturbances, most of them born from dissent with the government's policy of escalating the Vietnam war, the civil rights struggle, and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

The unhappy job fell to Gen. William Blakefield, head of the U.S. Army Intelligence Command.

In the course of keeping tabs on people who might foment or get involved in such disturbances, the Army compiled with "excessive zeal" (the quote is from Stanley Resor, Secretary of the Army from July, 1965, through

June 30, 1971) an incredibly indiscriminate list of American suspects.

The list included the following Democrats, all but one a possible Democratic candidate at one time or another for U.S. President: Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine, Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota, Sen. Fred Harris of Oklahoma, Sen. Harold Hughes of Iowa, Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, and Sen. Sam Ervin of North Carolina.

Other legislators gumshoed by Army Intelligence were former Senators Ralph Yarborough of Texas, Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, Congressman John Rarick of Louisiana, Philip Crane of Illinois and on and on ad nauseum.

Long list

Army investigators did not limit surveillance to Senators and Congressmen. They also placed under surveillance Thurgood Marshall, now an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; Francis Sargent, Republican Governor of Massachusetts; Kenneth Curtis, Democratic Governor of Maine, and thou-



SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY



REP. JOHN RARICK



SEN. GEORGE MCGOVERN



GOV. FRANCIS SARGENT



JUSTICE T. MARSHALL



SEN. EDMUND MUSKIE

Five years ago the Johnson Administration ordered the Army to gather intelligence on black activists, student radicals, civil rights militants, and those opposed to the war. Incredibly, the Army came up with indiscriminate intelligence on the people above as well as the DAR, Ku Klux Klan, university students. Army agents attended political rallies, filed reports often containing irrelevant, damaging information on innocent people.

sands of others, all at untold expense to the American taxpayers. These reports were sent back to Ft. Holabird, Md., and Ft. Monroe, Va., where they were computerized and stored.

Who in the Lyndon Johnson Administration ordered this indiscriminate espionage of American citizens? Where, why, and how did the program work? Who was responsible for the shameful and stupid snooping practice finally halted by the present Defense Secretary, Melvin Laird?

Ervin's attempts

For two years now the U.S. Senate's Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, that is headed by Sen. Sam Ervin, has been trying to find out.

It has repeatedly asked Secretary Laird and the Defense Department's general counsel, Fred Buzhardt, a protégé of and a former administrative assistant to Sen. Strom Thurmond (R., S.C.), to declassify documents and computer printouts involved in the Army's snooping program.

Secretary Laird, one of the greatest double-talkers in the history of government on the subject of overclassification, will not declassify the relevant documents which he has made available to the subcommittee on a classified basis. Neither will Fred Buzhardt.

No names

Lawrence M. Baskir, the subcommittee's chief counsel, does not want to reveal the names of the individuals involved in the various Army Intelligence reports. "Such names," he says, "will be blacked out.

"What we want is to reveal how this intelligence program began and how it went wrong, what lessons we can learn, what legislation might be enacted in the future to protect the people's rights. But Buzhardt and Laird won't let us. It is the same old Pentagon game of cover-up,

cover-up."

Bob Jordan, former Army counsel in the Johnson Administration, agrees that "the Army Intelligence surveillance program got out of hand in the late 1960's.

"There never were any orders issued by the Secretary of the Army," he explains,

"that would justify collection of intelligence on political figures. Army Intelligence simply overreacted. We in the Defense Department were told that they were gathering information from the FBI and local police. We had no

reason to believe that they had instituted a whole field network of prowling Army intelligence agents, some of them obviously none too bright.

"I have made clear many times," Jordan points out, "that a mistake was

made. I thought the whole plan was unnecessary, unproductive and contained very real dangers of violating the First Amendment."

Stanley Resor, former Secretary of the Army, says very much the same thing.

"We started to tighten up the program when we found out what Army people of excessive zeal were doing and filing in their reports. However, the entire program should be placed in its true perspective. At the time, riots had broken out in several cities: Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. There was a distinct possibility after the assassination of Martin Luther King that there might be more riots, more disturbances, that Army troops might have to move into as many as 25 cities. Charged with that job, the Army sought information

which might be of help to it in the future. Unfortunately Army Intelligence overreacted. I think a good lesson can be learned from that excessive zeal."

Declassify

Sen. Ervin's subcommittee wants permission to declassify the reports and documents which it has taken them two long years to obtain from the Defense Department. To date, neither Laird nor Buzhardt is willing. Buzhardt's reason: "The documents that have been given to Sen. Ervin's committee on a classified basis do not qualify for declassification under existing classification policies."

This sort of gobbledygook is nonsense. It is synonymous with the Defense Department's long-established policy of refusing to admit error unless it absolutely must as in the cases of the C-5A, the My Lai massacre, the post exchange scandal, and others.

Security endangered?

Unless Buzhardt and his boss-man, Melvin Laird, can honestly show that the national security will be endangered if they declassify what Senator Ervin and his committee request, they should inform the American citizenry on how and why Army intelligence agents spied upon so many of them from 1967 to 1970.

In this country the people still have a right to know.