

Post 12/30/70

Ex-Agent: Army Kept Spying

CHICAGO, Dec. 29 (AP)—A former Army intelligence agent testified today his unit ignored a ban on surveillance of private citizens and continued to trace such persons as Adlai E. Stevenson III, militant priest James E. Groppi and the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

John M. O'Brien, 26, a former member of the 113th Military Intelligence Group based in Evanston, a suburb of Chicago, testified in a U.S. District Court hearing on a suit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union against top Army officers including Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Army chief of staff.

The hearing is on a motion by the ACLU for a preliminary injunction to force the Army to halt the surveillance.

O'Brien was discharged in June but he said he visited his former unit last month and learned that surveillance activities continued. Col. Joseph Walker Jr., commander of the 113th and a defendant, said

Monday that surveillance was discontinued in June in accordance with an Army directive.

O'Brien testified he gathered intelligence during the October 1969 violence in Chicago triggered by the Weatherman faction of Students for a Democratic Society and once maintained surveillance on the home of a prominent businessman who was entertaining members of the Student Mobilization Committee and Veterans for Peace.

The watch on Stevenson took place before the Nov. 3 election in which he won a U.S. Senate seat, O'Brien said.

Another witness, Jared Stout, a reporter for the Newhouse National News Service in Washington, said the Army general counsel told him the Army maintained four computer data banks of information on civilians.

Stout said he interviewed Robert E. Jordan III earlier this month and that Jordan said data banks were situated at Ft. Monroe, Va.; Ft. Hood, Tex., and Ft. Holabird, Md.

Stout quoted Jordan as saying the computer banks were ordered destroyed but that copies of the information on the two banks at Ft. Holabird were forwarded to the Justice Department.

Stout also quoted Jordan as saying that information collected on civilians was "beyond the need of the Army."