

How 2 Presidents Push

By Vernon A. Guidry Jr.

Associated Press

Pressure from two presidents beset with domestic unrest and "overly ambitious" security programs pushed the CIA into large-scale domestic spying, according to a Senate Intelligence Committee report.

The staff report issued by the committee today says Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon

pressured CIA Director Richard Helms to find out if hostile foreign influences were behind the unrest. Those requests resulted in an operation known as CHAOS.

"Operation CHAOS was not an intelligence mission sought by the CIA. Presidents Johnson and Nixon pressed . . . Helms to determine the extent of hostile foreign influence on domestic unrest among students, opponents of the Vietnam War,

minorities and the 'New Left,'" the staff report read. "By all the testimony and available evidence, it was this pressure which led to the creation and expansion of a special office in the CIA to coordinate the efforts to respond."

EXCEPT FOR "a few isolated incidents," which were not detailed in the report, CHAOS found nothing but home-grown dissent. Before the

Dripping

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The Washing

124th Year. No. 139

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WASHINGTON, D.C., TUESDAY,

ed CIA to Spy on Us

project ended, however, the names of some 300,000 Americans had been fed into a computer system the CIA called HYDRA.

"In any ordinary sense of the word, the CIA had 'collected' a great deal of information in the United States about Americans, which was systematically maintained . . . and used in the CHAOS program," the report said.

The report was perhaps the least

accusatory and most cautiously worded of those so far issued by the committee in its attempt to detail abuses by the federal intelligence apparatus. It says that the history of the CHAOS program "raises a serious question whether the entire mission was a proper one for CIA.

The inquiry into links between American dissidents and foreign elements inevitably involved the agency not only in 'foreign intelligence' but

also in examining domestic affairs . . . and, at the least, treading close to prohibited internal security functions."

THE REPORT does note that, in apprising the White House on unrest among young people, then-Director Helms observed that the scope of the project in part went beyond the CIA's charter to pursue foreign intelligence.

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CAPITAL SPECIAL

MAY 18, 1976

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CIA

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If CHAOS left the staff in doubt, it was a little more positive in the area of two security programs called MERRIMAC and RESISTANCE. These programs, the report said, "represent an overly ambitious view of the CIA's authority to act on behalf of the director of Central Intelligence to protect intelligence sources and methods."

In these programs the CIA assumed the forbidden tasks of law enforcement and maintaining internal security in the required defense of those sources and methods. "Both programs involved the CIA in examining domestic dissident activity, which, insofar as it actually threatened the

government or particular agencies was a matter of internal security or law enforcement," the report read.

Like the FBI, the CIA used a number of covert techniques against U.S. citizens including physical surveillance, electronic surveillance, unauthorized entry, inspection of mail and of income tax records.

THE CHAOS mission was examined by a commission Vice President Nelson Rockefeller headed. The commission concluded that with a number of individual exceptions, the CHAOS mission was a proper foreign intelligence exercise. The intelligence committee drew heavily on the information gathered by the Rockefeller commission.

The Senate committee staff report says the "ultimate question before the Congress is the degree to

which a secret foreign intelligence agency should conduct clandestine operations in the United States directed at Americans."