

The Washington merry-go-round

Fred's

Jack Anderson

With LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON — The computer system, which the FBI is supposed to use in its war against crime, has been misused to keep tabs on noncriminals.

For years, the FBI has operated a National Crime Information Center, which is equipped with a multi-million-dollar computer. This is now crammed with information about criminals. The purpose is to help police throughout the country identify public enemies, particularly fugitives on the

At Arizona highway patrolman, for example, may stop a speeder who appears suspicious. The officer could query the FBI computer center and might discover the driver is wanted for kidnapping in Maine.

It was never intended, however, that this all-knowing, never-forgetting electronic contrivance should be used to store information about noncriminals.

Such misuse, if it should get out of hand, could extinguish forever the right of privacy. It could lead to a computerized master file on all Americans. At the press of a button, the computer could produce any person's entire life history.

In 1971, the FBI began using its master computer to monitor the activities of noncriminals. The names of more than 4,700 noncriminals were "flagged."

The FBI abruptly ended its misuse of the computer center in February, 1974, precisely two days before Sen. Sam Ervin, D-N.C., opened hearings on

federal snooping.

But Ervin's successor as head of the Senate Constitutional Rights subcommittee, Sen. John Tunney, D-Calif., has now wrung a reluctant confession from the Justice Department that the FBI had perverted the criminal tracking system to keep an electronic eye on noncriminals.

Flags were used to help locate individuals in matters wherein the FBI had the obligation to determine their whereabouts. Deputy Attorney General Harold Tyler conceded in a private letter to Tunney.

The letter stressed this was done, as a "pilot program," in "national security" cases. The term "national security" has been used in the past, however, to include controversial movie stars, football players, political leaders, newspapermen and even presidential candidates.

An FBI spokesman emphasized that the 4,700 noncriminals, whose names were fed into the computer, were "under FBI jurisdiction." As he explained it, for example, a potential draatee who failed to report to the Selective Service might have been "flagged."

Senator Tunney is suspicious that the FBI computer has been used to keep track of Congressmen. He asked the Justice Department pointblank whether the FBI had any Congressman in the "flag file." Tyler artfully dodged the question, but the FBI vigorously denied that any Members of Congress had been

monitored.

The spokesman also pointed out that the computer center was not under the FBI's sole jurisdiction but was governed by a 26-man board, including various chiefs of police.

The skeptical Tunney, meanwhile, is pressing the Justice Department for more specific answers. He is concerned that the misuse of the computer may be a federal violation.

INTELLIGENCE DIGEST: Once the Israeli-Egyptian agreement is implemented, an intelligence report warns, Arab extremists plan to infiltrate into the neutral zone and kill some of the American technicians manning the observation equipment. The intent, of course, is to disrupt the truce.

A CIA report alleges that Soviet money has been passed under the table to bribe one of Portugal's top rulers. We are checking out the details.

Japan's Defense Minister Michita Sakata has given secret assurances that the U.S. can use military bases in Japan to resist a North Korean attack upon South Korea. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, meanwhile, has made some anti-Japanese cracks inside the secret policy councils.

The Shah of Iran has confided to visitors that he hopes to bring diplomatic pressure to exclude both the U.S. and Soviet fleets, first, from the Persian Gulf and then from the Indian Ocean.

The Soviet KGB, according to intelligence reports, is encouraging

Arab extremists to step up their revolutionary activities against the oil sheikhdoms. Both Algeria and Libya are cooperating, at least indirectly, with the KGB, the reports allege.

Of all the oil countries, Saudi Arabia stands alone in seeking to hold off an oil price increase. Seven of the 13 oil cartel members, led by Algeria and Kuwait, want a stunning \$2-per-barrel increase on October 1. The five remaining oil countries are willing to settle for \$1 per barrel more.

Egypt's President Anwar Sadat is quietly seeking the U.S. \$250 million in economic aid and favorable terms for the purchase of up to \$1 billion in military equipment.

The Chinese Communists have gained the ear of the rulers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Significantly, the Chinese are whispering anti-Soviet, not anti-American remarks.

The underdeveloped, third-world nations are trying to get their hands in Uncle Sam's pockets. It's all part of their campaign to redistribute the world's wealth from the rich nations to the poor nations. One suggestion, brought up in the backrooms of Washington, is that the U.S. put the third-world nations on the spot by offering a program to concentrate the aid upon the 30 or 40 most impoverished nations. This would bypass the nations raising the loudest holler.

Omission marked

FBI File Included Noncriminals

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

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