

Capitol Said to Have Been Off Limits to FBI Agents

12/31/74 By Ronald Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writer

Former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover declared the grounds of the Capitol "off limits" to FBI agents, prompting Soviet spies to meet there regularly because they were not watched, a former high-ranking FBI official said yesterday.

The official, who asked not to be named, said Hoover issued the directive in the late 1960s because of fear of criticism from members of Congress, who periodically charged Hoover with tapping their telephones or compiling dossiers on their personal lives.

The directive, the former official said, was that any surveillance was to be cut off when the subjects "headed for Capitol Hill."

The Soviets quickly learned of this prohibition and scheduled meetings there, he said. The meetings were between Soviet personnel, often attached to the embassy here, and

Americans who had been cultivated as spies, he said.

"The Soviets would meet in the Capitol building, and it would put us at a hell of a disadvantage," the former official said.

He said the meetings took place in parked cars or inside the Capitol building.

Asked if the prohibition is still in effect, an FBI spokesman said matters relating to national security investigations are confidential and cannot be discussed.

The former official said that in addition to preventing surveillance of Soviet agents on the Hill, Hoover had a disinclination to carry out requests for domestic surveillance made by the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Hoover would say let the CIA do its own work," he said. "The reason was he hated the CIA. He wanted worldwide operations," the former official said.