

WHITE HOUSE SEES POLITICAL MOTIVE IN ATTACK ON F.B.I.

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Ziegler Asserts Foes Seek to Intimidate Country and Discredit Administration

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WASHINGTON, April 16—

The White House charged today that some of its political opponents were engaged in a calculated, "blatantly political effort" to intimidate the nation and discredit the Nixon Administration with charges that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had improperly used its surveillance powers.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the Presidential press secretary, decried what he said was an attempt to "create an attitude, an impression" that the Administration and the bureau were indiscriminately spying on law-abiding citizens.

The press secretary's comments represented the strongest rebuttal so far from the White House to recent charges made by Representative Hale Boggs, Democrat of Louisiana, that the bureau spied on his personal life, and by Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Democrat of Maine, that the agency had raised "a dangerous threat to constitutional rights" by engaging in surveillance of last year's antipollution rallies on Earth Day.

Sees Political Motives

Mr. Ziegler did not mention Senator Muskie, a leading contender for the Democratic Presidential nomination, by name. But when asked whether the Maine Senator was among those whom he had described as "creating a feeling of fear and intimidation among the people" for essentially "politi-

cal" motives, he replied:

"I think that those who have raised these questions [about the F. B. I.] are apparent to everyone."

He alluded to Senator Muskie later when, after saying the White House would welcome a Congressional investigation of Representative Boggs's charges, he suggested that Senator Muskie's charges did not warrant a similar review because they could be "so clearly placed in the political category."

Senator Muskie, who was traveling in New Hampshire, said he expected his charges to be called political. "There's no news in that," he said. He further suggested that the Administration had refused to "come to grips with the facts" surrounding the bureau's alleged surveillance activities on Earth Day.

During a long exchange at his regular morning briefing, Mr. Ziegler was also asked several times about a report in this morning's New York

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Times that the F.B.I. had monitored, and presumably recorded, telephone conversations of Representative John Dowdy, a Texas Democrat who has since been indicted on charges of accepting \$25,000 in a bribery conspiracy.

The same article also said that the bureau had sent an informant to the Congressman's office with a tape recorder strapped to his back. Both the reported monitoring and the use of the tape recorder contradicted recent statements by Justice Department officials that the bureau had never engaged in electronic surveillance of Congressmen, even in the course of investigating specific illegal acts.

Mr. Ziegler would not comment specifically on the Dowdy case, with which he said he was unfamiliar, but he stated on at least two occasions that "electronic eavesdropping" on Representatives and Senators was "contrary to our policy."

Late today, Federal District Judge Roszel C. Thomsen in Bal-

timore made public previously secret documents confirming that the Government had recorded three telephone conversations and one face-to-face conversation between Mr. Dowdy and Nathan Cohen, an informant, while investigating the Representative's bribe conspiracy case in January, 1970.

No Reason for Secrecy

Judge Thomsen said he was releasing the documents because this morning's article in The Times "removed the principal reason for keeping them sealed." He added that they had been kept secret at Mr. Dowdy's request, and that the Justice Department attorneys in the case "have at all times taken the position that these papers should have been made public."

Mr. Ziegler's statements that Senator Muskie's charges were largely "political" followed by less than 24 hours the assertions by Attorney General John N. Mitchell that the F.B.I. was well within its authority to dispatch agents to Earth Day rallies because it had advance information that persons with records of violence were planning to attend.