

Nixon White House Sought FBI Data on Gay Journalists

Hoover Memo of Talk With Haldeman Found

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By Eleanor Randolph
Washington Post Staff Writer

In November 1970, President Nixon's chief of staff H.R. Haldeman asked then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to pass on any information the agency had collected about homosexuals "known and suspected in the Washington press corps," according to a newly discovered memo of the conversation that was made by Hoover at the time.

Hoover, who addressed the memo to his five assistants, said that Haldeman had called and "stated the president wanted him to ask, and he would imagine I would have it pretty much at hand so there would be no specific investigation, for a rundown on the homosexuals known and suspected in the Washington press corps."

The memo went on to say, "I thought we have some of that material. Mr. Haldeman mentioned [name or names deleted] and some of the others rumored generally to be and also whether we had any other stuff: that he, the president, has an interest in what, if anything else, we know.

"I told Mr. Haldeman I would get after that right away, and we ought

to be able to send it over certainly not later than Friday," the memo said. It concludes, "Very truly yours, John Edgar Hoover, director."

The document, which was found by a California researcher, Robert Ranftel, among the files now available to the public in the FBI's Freedom of Information and Privacy Act reading room in Washington, is a telephone memo from Hoover dated Nov. 25, 1970, at 4:32 p.m.

A media-watch group in New York called FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) plans to reprint the document in its newsletter, EXTRA!, to be published this week.

Ranftel said that he and another researcher in New York, Peter Krass, had requested information that might have been passed to the White House on Nov. 27, 1970, two days after Hoover's memo. He said the FBI told them Hoover's copy of whatever material went to the White House had been destroyed. The researchers are asking for descriptions of the documents that were destroyed and for documents from other FBI officials' files that could relate to the memo, he said.

Haldeman, contacted in California where he is now running several small businesses, said he does not remember making the telephone call to Hoover or receiving any response.

"It rings no bells at all," Haldeman said.

Charles D. Brennan, one of the assistant FBI directors to whom the memo was addressed, said he had no recollection of the memo. "That was 17 years ago," he said.

Experts on Hoover said that it was the former FBI director's practice to make a record of every phone conversation or contact with the White House.

"I have no doubt that it's a dependable rendition of what happened," said David Garrow, who won a Pulitzer prize this year for his nonfiction book on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "As a regular matter, whenever he would have a phone request from the White House, he dictated one of these memos. It was Hoover's way of maintaining a ... paper record."

"It's well known Hoover was obsessed by the issue of homosexuals. Many people think it was because he was not certain about his own sexual [identity]," said Sanford Ungar, dean of the school of communication at American University and author of a 1976 book, "FBI: An Uncensored Look Behind the Walls."

"But in many ways this memo tells more about Haldeman than it does about Hoover," Ungar added.