

Parade 8-24-75

MILITARY LISTENERS

Amid the current controversy over covert activities of the Central Intelligence Agency, little attention has been paid to the work of intelligence organizations operated by the Army, Navy and Air Force -- all of which report to the National Security Agency, a federal agency far bigger and more secretive than the CIA.

In one previously unreported case, classified military documents show that the Army Security Agency secretly monitored civilian radio messages on at least six occasions during the past 10 years, even though the Army knew the practice was illegal.

Watching from Vint Hill Farms Station and Arlington Hall Station, two Army installations in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, Army intelligence officers covertly monitored walkie-talkie messages of Washington demonstrators following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April,

1968, and again during the "Poor People's Campaign," a Washington civil rights encampment during May and June of 1968.

In addition, the Army Security Agency secretly overheard civilian radio messages during both the Republican and Democratic Presidential nominating conventions in 1968, the California trial of Black Panther leader Huey Newton in 1968 and a demonstration at the Pentagon to protest United States involvement in the Vietnam war in 1967.

A classified 1968 memo from the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence to the Army's General Counsel refers directly to the question of the legality of that practice: "Existing laws prohibit monitoring civilian radio transmissions, and for the U.S. Army Security Agency to continue covert monitoring could prove harmful to the U.S. Army if compromised."