

CIA Infiltrated 17 Area Groups, Gave Out LSD

District the Focus

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Agents working for the CIA were instructed to infiltrate and monitor at least 17 Washington area activist groups—ranging from the Black Panthers to the Washington Ethical Society—during 1967 and 1968, according to the Rockefeller Commission report released yesterday.

Washington became the focus of nationwide CIA surveillance of antiwar and black political groups during those years, when protest demonstrations and disruptions were growing in size and intensity, the commission reported.

The domestic spying started after requests from President Johnson for information on possible foreign links to domestic dissident groups and because of the CIA's own fear that political dissidents might harm the agency's personnel or property here.

The Rockefeller commission concluded that the surveillance of dissidents was not covered by the CIA's legal mandate to conduct intelligence activities outside the United States and to protect itself, and therefore was illegal.

"The agency's infiltration of dissident groups in the Washington area," the report said, "went far beyond the steps necessary to protect the agency's own facilities, personnel and operations, and therefore exceeded the CIA's statutory authority."

The information gathered here by agents who were called "assets" in CIA parlance was turned over to "Operation CHAOS," the CIA's program of monitoring dissident groups around the country. In all, Operation CHAOS put the names of 300,000 Americans on a computerized index and developed 7,200 separate "personality files on citizens of the United States," according to the report.

As many as a dozen agents working for the CIA were involved at any one time in the infiltration and surveillance of dissident groups in the Washington area, according to the Rockefeller Commission.

The agents were directed to report the names of speakers at the meetings they attended, the substance of the speeches and any threatening remarks made toward U.S. government leaders.

They also were told to make evaluations