

Justice Overhauling 'Subversives' List

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The Justice Department is reappraising the need for its subversive organizations list, which has not been significantly changed since 1955, Attorney General William B. Saxbe said yesterday.

Detente with the Soviet Union and a generally more relaxed attitude toward international communism already

may have made the list obsolete, Saxbe suggested.

Also under review, Saxbe said, are some federal internal security laws, although he did not specify which ones. He indicated that the constitutionality of some statutes governing subversive groups is being examined, but stressed that Justice would not revamp internal security policy without the guidance of Congress.

The 1950s fears of commu-

nist infiltration of large numbers of domestic organizations, the Attorney General said, may have "exploded with the domino theory."

As a result, four Justice Department divisions Tuesday began a study of the list of nearly 300 so-called subversive groups, Saxbe said.

The purpose of the study is to "revise or get rid of" the list, he said, but until the re-evaluation is complete, he declined to say which he favors.

Saxbe said a study was first begun 10 months ago, about the time former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson took office, but was "put in limbo" during the frequent transitions in the top Justice post.

"We're putting it back on the front burner," Saxbe said.

The Justice Department divisions studying the subversives list, Saxbe said, include the FBI, the Criminal Division, the Office of Legal Counsel and the Office of Criminal Justice.

The list was compiled during World War II and was first made public under President Truman's 1947 executive order. It is for use by federal agencies in screening applicants for government employment.

The last major revision occurred Nov. 1, 1955, although in October, 1972, a U.S. Court of Appeals ordered that the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a group of Americans who fought with the Loyalists against Franco in the Spanish Civil War, be stricken from the list. In 1958, the Independent Socialist League, a small Marxist group, won a 10-year legal battle to be stricken from the list.

With the dismantling of the Subversive Activities Control Board and Justice's Internal Security Division early in 1973, the list has received little attention recently.

Saxbe suggested that because terrorism appears to be "emanating from different groups of people," some communist-oriented groups on the list could be removed and some new organizations added.