

Secret Hoover Files

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By Joanne Omang
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Franklin D. Roosevelt dismembered the Army's spy-catching Counter-Intelligence Corps in 1943 after it allegedly spied on Eleanor Roosevelt's sex life, according to third-hand reports in former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's "official and confidential" files outlined in the current issue of U.S. News and World Report.

In its Dec. 19 issue, out today, the news magazine describes the contents of 7,000 documents from Hoover's secret files made public recently under a Freedom of Information Act request by historian Athan Theoharis of Marquette University in Milwaukee.

In a telephone interview with The Washington Post, Theoharis called the papers "a very valuable collection . . . , part of Hoover's 'dirt file,'" but noted that another 10,000 pages were withheld for national security, personal privacy or other reasons allowed by law.

The documents, although heavily censored, show a pattern of heavy use by presidents from FDR to Richard M. Nixon of the FBI's considerable powers to investigate political enemies, intimidate critics and engage in wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping for concerns having nothing to do with national security, according to Theoharis.

They document the development of FBI policy on the use of micro-electronic equipment and the twists and turns of congressional oversight efforts. "Some documents suggest the bureau was operating on its own in installing wiretaps," Theoharis said.

The documents also substantiate widely published allegations from former FBI officials that Hoover kept virtually every scrap of information that came into his hands from any source, with or without corroboration, and "drew on the wealth of defamatory information at his fingertips to curry favor with presidents and other officials," the article says.

FBI officials, confirming the pa-

pers' release, said they would not comment on the magazine article or the content of the documents, which are expected to be made available to the public at the FBI library.

An FBI agent named G.C. Burton wrote a memo Dec. 31, 1943, included among the documents, that purported to explain why FDR had all but closed down the Counter-Intelligence Corps earlier that year. Burton said two colonels had told him the CIC infuriated Roosevelt by bringing him tapes allegedly of Eleanor Roosevelt having sex in a hotel room with Army Air Force Sgt. Joseph P. Lash, then 33, who was under surveillance for suspected involvement with leftist groups.

Lash, author of the 1982 book "Love, Eleanor," has vehemently denied having an affair with Eleanor Roosevelt, who was 26 years older than he.

"Mrs. Roosevelt was called into the conference and was confronted with the information, and this resulted in a terrific fight between the president and Mrs. Roosevelt," Burton's memo said the colonels had told him.

A few weeks later, Lash and 10 other airmen were abruptly transferred from Michigan to the South Pacific and the CIC headquarters at Fort Holabird, Md., was closed. By the end of the year, hundreds of CIC agents had been reassigned.

But other memos in the file suggest that Burton's sources may have mixed up a CIC report of an uneventful, strictly platonic March meeting between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lash at a hotel with another CIC report of a very un-platonic night Lash spent a week later in the same hotel with the woman he later married, Trude Pratt. "A later CIA memo clearly confuses the two," the U.S. News article said.

The papers show that President Lyndon B. Johnson's office ordered that no records of his requests be kept, an order Hoover ignored. Johnson demanded and got "blind memos" on paper without letterheads, signatures or watermarks.

At his order, the FBI talked to "at

Show Misuse of FBI

least five officials of the [Washington] Evening Star, including the editor, Newbold Noyes," in June, 1965, about Johnson's irritation at unfavorable Star articles, the documents show.

Agents also questioned reporters about Chicago Daily News reporter Peter Lisagor in 1966 when Johnson was irritated with him. In 1962, when Johnson was vice president, agents had interviewed the editor of Farm and Ranch magazine over a critical editorial he had written about Johnson.

The documents include voluminous files on President John F. Kennedy's alleged playboy activities, and

quite a lot on Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956, frequently misspelling his name. There are also dossiers on Roosevelt holdovers in President Harry S Truman's administration, compiled at Truman's request, and on three employees of Dwight D. Eisenhower's White House who resigned after charges of homosexual activity.

But virtually none of the files include data on Eisenhower himself, and the FBI withheld a 5,000-page file on Truman's White House, Theoharis said. "We just have the cover letters on reports that are deleted," he said.