

Law Agencies Discount

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James McCord's professed fear of antiwar violence and massive demonstrations against last summer's Republican National Convention in Miami Beach conflicts directly with intelligence estimates of law enforcement agencies assigned to convention security.

In his testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee this week and last week, the former security chief for the Nixon re-election committee stressed concern that "violence-oriented groups were out to endanger both life and property" with a horde of 250,000 protesters planning to swamp the convention in August, according to early estimates.

But officials of the Justice Department, FBI, Miami Beach police and the Republican National Committee say their intelligence estimates never approached the 250,000 figure, nor did they anticipate the level of violence described by McCord.

Police and Justice officials say that their crowd estimates actually diminished during months preceding the convention, especially after the convention site was switched from San Diego to Miami Beach in early May.

As it turned out, some 3,000 to 5,000 protesters did show up, conducting a number of desultory marches each day on the convention hall and skirmishing with police on the last night during an unsuccessful attempt to block traffic at the hall. Police fired fusillades of tear gas and about 1,000 persons were arrested.

McCord testified Tuesday that he was doubly concerned about potential violence because he believed that several violence-prone radical organizations had ties with both the McGovern

organization and Democratic National Committee where some staff workers might "quietly encourage" such groups.

The need to discover the extent of these ties, he said, formed the justification for bugging Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex.

"My mission was the protection of (re-election committee) lives and property," he explained.

"I felt that the Watergate operation might produce some leads answering some of these questions," he said, "and I had been advised that the operation had the sanction of the White House and of the Attorney General."

McCord said he relied on regular reports from the Justice Department's internal security division to help him to determine the potential for violence at the Miami Beach convention. He began receiving the reports, he said, in the last two weeks of May, 1972, and the Watergate break-in was executed a few weeks later, on June 17.

But Daniel J. McAuliffe, then a deputy assistant attorney general in the internal security division, told The Washington Post this week that intelligence reports were being progressively "downgraded" during that period.

He said in a telephone interview from Phoenix, Ariz., where he is now in private law practice, that he could not recall specific numerical estimates, "but the San Di-

ego estimates were larger than anything we expected in Miami Beach."

He said the estimates were based on FBI reports and showed a steady downward trend throughout the summer both as to numbers of demonstrators and as to the level of violence expected.

The switch from San Diego to Miami Beach effectively blunted organizational efforts of demonstration leaders, says Sgt. Pete Corso, an aide to Miami Beach Police Chief Rocky Pomerance.

"Florida is geographically and politically isolated," he said. "There is no 'counterculture' headquarters here like in California. . . . The momentum of the demonstrators was all in the other direction. They never recovered after the switch to Miami."

Ody J. Fish, sergeant-at-arms and security chief for the Republican National Committee, also said crowd estimates he received diminished as the summer wore on. "I didn't share the alarm that some (re-election committee officials) had about large numbers and the temperament of the non-delegates (demonstrators) coming to Miami," he said.

Fish earlier this year branded as "unture" testimony by re-election committee official Jeb Stuart Magruder at the Watergate trial that the threat of 250,000 protesters coming to San Diego was the primary reason for shifting the convention site to Miami Beach.

Fish told The Post that the 250,000 estimate was unrealistically high, that security was never considered a crucial problem and that the chief reason for moving involved construction and leasing problems.

San Diego Assistant Police Chief Jim Connole, who headed local convention security preparations in early 1972, said he never expected more than 20,000 to 25,000 demonstrators. Connole and other law enforcement officials added that it was impossible to make realistic estimates so many months before the convention itself.

The first public reference to the 250,000 estimates was made at the Watergate trial last January by Magruder who said Watergate defendant G. Gordon Liddy, as chief of the re-election committee's intelligence apparatus, had come up with the figure.

Magruder said Liddy was authorized \$100,000 to organize a spy network, including recruitment of college-aged informers, to monitor antiwar plans for the convention. Magruder did not say whether the network ever became operational.

Several FBI, Justice Department and police officials have said that if the network existed at all, it was inefficient, costly, inaccurate and lacked liaison with normal government intelligence gathering agencies.

In his Senate testimony this week, McCord did not mention a Liddy network but said only that Liddy

McCord's Convention Fears

"wanted help" from McCord in gathering intelligence.

In explaining the origins of his concern about possible danger to the re-election committee in Miami Beach, McCord itemized a number of violent incidents dating back to early 1971.

These included the bombing of the Capitol on March 1, 1971, the bombing of a restroom in the Pentagon on May 19, 1972, the bombing two days earlier of the Manchester, N.H., police headquarters, the bombing of Alameda County Republican headquarters in Oakland, Calif., on Feb. 13 and what McCord called the fire-bomb destruction May 9 of the office Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.) in Austin.

He did not say how the Capitol and Pentagon bombings were linked to violence planned against the Nixon re-election committee,

but noted that the Oakland and Austin blasts were directed at Republican offices.

In the case of the Manchester police headquarters bombing, he said, a woman arrested at the scene possessed letters saying, "We have just bombed the offices of the Committee to Re-Elect the President in New Hampshire." He said this suggested the bombers planned to go to the re-election office after the police bombing and only their arrest prevented it.

News accounts at the time said New Hampshire Attorney General Warren Rudman claimed the arrested woman possessed "news releases" announcing that Nixon headquarters was also a target. No bombs were found there, according to news accounts.

In the Sen. Tower case,

Austin Fire Chief Ed Kirkham specifically rejected the possibility of arson, ruling that the evidence indicated the fire in the office was of accidental origin.

The Oakland blast occurred at nighttime shattering windows of the GOP headquarters. No one was injured.

McCord in his testimony repeatedly referred to "violence-oriented" radical organizations but specified only one by name—the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).

He testified the VVAW "was already saying in the spring of 1972 that they were going to cause destruction to life and property at the August Republican convention, using in their own words, their own bodies and weapons as the spearhead of the attack."

VVAW national leaders have vehemently denied the charges, contending such plans are contrary to the organization's purposes.

Six VVAW members were indicted last July in Gainesville, Fla., on federal charges of plotting to cause riots at the GOP convention with firebombs and automatic weapons. The defendants denied the charges, contending the VVAW was infiltrated by provocateurs. Trial is scheduled for July 17.

The charges contrast with the observations of numerous federal officials that both leaders and rank-and-file of the VVAW have frequently acted to defuse potentially violent situations and isolate trouble makers in Miami last summer and at other demonstrations in previous years.