

SF Examiner
FBI files bare 'war'
against the New Left

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secret FBI files contain potentially explosive information describing the tactics used in a calculated effort to destroy the New Left movement, according to informed Justice Department sources.

The material is so sensitive that only a handful of officials outside the FBI know even general details of the so-called counterintelligence program operated nationwide for three years.

Few officials will discuss it even confidentially for fear of disturbing delicate negotiations which could lead at least to partial public disclosure.

"It's just too hot to talk about," said one official.

However, knowledgeable sources say the program involved the widespread use of agents-provocateurs to infiltrate leftist groups and encourage them to undertake possibly violent activities.

The late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said as much when he told FBI field offices, in the 1968 memo that established the program, to "also inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant."

Hoover ordered the program on May 10, 1968, and terminated it without explanation in a memo on April 28, 1971.

Department sources say Ramsey Clark, who was attorney general when it be-

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gan, never knew about it and John Mitchell, the attorney general during the remainder of the program, probably didn't either.

Nor, the sources say, is it likely that President Nixon or former President Johnson knew of it.

The bare-bones Hoover memos and the FBI refusal to disclose additional information raise scores of questions about the tactics, the scope of the operation, and the legality and constitutionality of some of the methods.

One curious aspect is that the Hoover operation bears a striking similarity to a domestic security plan drafted by a former White House aide and approved, at least briefly, by Nixon.

The Hoover operation also lends support to the allegations of massive and possibly illegal spying conducted by the FBI against sever-

al radical activists involved in recent trials. The allegations have been made by defense lawyers who demanded access to relevant FBI documents.

In those cases, federal prosecutors have dropped the charges rather than disclose the information.

A third aspect is the likelihood of civil suits against Justice Department and FBI officials claiming damages for violation of constitutional rights because of unjustified harassment. Two suits seeking nearly \$30 million have been filed so far.

Justice Department sources acknowledge that FBI officials may have violated the law with some counterintelligence tactics, but FBI officials have insisted in private meetings that no illegal or unconstitutional action was taken.

The White House security plan was aimed at "individuals and groups in the United States who pose a

major threat to the internal security," according to White House memos that surfaced last summer during the Watergate investigation.

It proposed that governmental burglaries and mail interceptions, widespread wiretapping and a vastly expanded network of informers on college campuses.

It floundered, according to memos written in 1970 by then White House aide Tom Charles Huston, because Hoover refused to accept a joint intelligence operation with other national security and intelligence agencies.

Throughout the planning stage, Huston wrote, Hoover strenuously objected to the project, insisting that "current operations are perfectly satisfactory."

What he apparently meant by "current operations," it turns out, were his counterintelligence and agent-provocateurs that had been in effect for some two years.