

Nixon's Woman Friend Investigated by the FBI

Washington

The FBI investigated a Hong Kong woman friend of Richard Nixon for two years in the late 1960s to determine whether she was a foreign intelligence agent.

The investigation, which covered the period of Mr. Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign and the first six months of his administration, came about after an FBI agent stationed in Hong Kong reported to bureau headquarters that Mr. Nixon had had a recent affair with the woman, Marianna Liu, then a hostess at the Hong Kong Hilton Hotel.

According to numerous interviews over the last several months with individuals in and out of government, the bureau never found any evidence suggesting that Mrs. Liu was an intelligence agent, that Mr. Nixon maintained an intimate relationship with her or that their friendship represented a threat to national security.

Mrs. Liu, who now lives in California, has denied that she and Mr. Nixon were ever intimate. Nixon spokesmen have refused to comment on the matter.

Mr. Nixon was apparently not told of the inquiry while it was under way, and sources familiar with the case said that they did not think that J. Edgar Hoover, then the FBI director, was informed of it for more than a year after the inquiry was quietly terminated by middle-level bureau officials.

The Nixon case sheds additional light on the operations of the FBI and its past practice of compiling sensitive personal information of public figures, even when no apparent security risk was found.

Although several sources said that nothing was found in FBI checks to indicate that Mrs. Liu's background or foreign affiliations posed any threat to national security, the bureau file on her case remained active for nearly two years before it was sealed in July 1969.

Top FBI officials were apparently kept uninformed of the investigation, which began in the fall of 1967 and continued until July 1969.

In the summer of 1970, a year after the Liu file was officially closed, the FBI agent in Hong Kong who had initially reported the friendship three years before sent a personal letter about the matter to J. Edgar Hoover, then the FBI director.

According to one Hoover aide, the director expressed surprise when he read the letter and asked how widely the allegation was known within the bureau.

The aide, who was also unaware of the investigation and the extensive information about Mrs. Liu that then rested in the bureau's "obscene matters" files, said that he believed the matter was known only to Hoover, himself and the agent in Hong Kong, who held the post of legal attache in the American consulate there.

"Keep this to yourself," the aide quoted Hoover as saying, "and I will take it up directly with the President."

Neither this aide nor others could say whether the FBI director ever told Mr. Nixon of the report, nor was there any indication that the report weighed in Mr. Nixon's decision in the summer of 1971 to keep Hoover as director.)

Hoover died in office at the age of 77 on May 2, 1972.

One FBI official involved with the early stages of the two-year investigation, said that the inquiry was "quite low key" at the beginning, and that he thought it had been soon ended. He said that he was at a loss to explain who within the bureau had kept the case active until well after Mr. Nixon had entered the White House or why he had done so.

In a recent interview in the Los Angeles restaurant where she now works, Mrs. Liu, who became a naturalized American citizen last year, said that she first met Mr. Nixon when he was vice president and she was a part-time tour guide for a Hong Kong travel agency.

Mrs. Liu, a 44-year-old mother of two children who no longer lives with her husband, said that she saw Mr. Nixon on several occasions after that in the mid-1960s, that he gave her perfume and flowers and that she once visited him in his Hong Kong's Mandarin Hotel.

But she said that she and Mr. Nixon had never been intimate.

* (Jan 1953 - Jan 1961)

White House travel records show that Mr. Nixon visited Hong Kong once each year between 1964 and 1967 in connection with his representation of clients of the Wall Street law firm of Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Alexander & Mitchell.

Mrs. Liu said that she believed she saw Mr. Nixon on his trips in 1964, 1965 and 1966, but that she was hospitalized when he arrived in Hong Kong on April 7, 1967, and that he sent flowers to her room, but did not pay her a visit.

She said that Mr. Nixon told her on an earlier visit that if she ever decided to emigrate to the United States and needed assistance, she could call on him. She said that he gave her his card, bearing the address of his New York law firm, and signed it, but that she never asked him for help.

When Mrs. Liu did settle in the United States, she lived first in Whittier, several blocks from the Nixon family home. Last September, she moved to San Gabriel, about 30 miles from Los Angeles.

New York Times

Additional paragraphs,
NYTimes, filed Watergate:

According to Mrs. Liu's petition for naturalization, filed with the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service on March 13, 1975, she was admitted to the United States for permanent residence on Dec. 1, 1969.

However, that date appears to have been typed over another one that had been erased. Immigration officials in Los Angeles could not say why it might have been changed.

One F.B.I. source said that he recalled having been told that Mr. Nixon had somehow intervened with Federal authorities in Mrs. Liu's behalf to seek her admission to the United States as a permanent resident alien.

Asked whether she had received any such

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assistance, the woman, who entered this country permanently while Mr. Nixon was President-elect, said that she had not. But she declined to sign a release that would have made the contents of her Immigration and Naturalization Service file available for inspection by The New York Times.

"[Mrs. Nixon] and her husband had not really been close since the early 1960s, the First Lady confided to one of her White House physicians. She had wanted to divorce him after his 1962 defeat in the California gubernatorial campaign. She tried, and failed, to win his promise not to seek office again. "

[From "The Final Days," by Woodward and Bernstein, as quoted by Haynes Johnson, WXP 27 Mar 76.]