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The CIA's Files On U.S. Citizens



Jack Anderson

THE Central Intelligence Agency's secret files on American citizens, according to sources who have had access to them, show no evidence of widespread domestic surveillance by the CIA.

Our sources confirm The New York Times report that the CIA has the names of at least 10,000 American citizens in its files. But most of the names were furnished by domestic agencies as part of an intelligence exchange that was established after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The largest batch of names — a computerized printout listing 9000 antiwar agitators, new leftists and ghetto militants — was turned over to the CIA in 1969 by the Justice Department's civil disturbance unit.

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THE UNIT CHIEF, James Devine, arranged to deliver the names to the CIA's antiterrorist expert, Richard Ober, who had made a study of radical movements overseas.

From the 9000 names, the CIA picked out those who had received training or had participated in demonstrations overseas. This information was relayed back to the Justice Department for its guidance in dealing with domestic demonstrations.

The CIA prepared reports, for example, on Black Panthers who had received guerrilla training in Libya and demolition instruction in North Korea. The CIA also identified Arab students in America who

had alleged ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But only rarely, the files show, did the CIA keep these individuals under surveillance in the United States. "The CIA simply doesn't have the manpower to keep 10,000 Americans under surveillance," said one source.

We also checked law enforcement agencies to find out what kind of information they had received from the CIA about American citizens. The word from each agency was that CIA messages invariably contain a legitimate overseas angle.

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AT THE same time, our sources acknowledge there were several "gray areas," where the CIA has crossed into domestic operations. The CIA, for example, may develop informants, defectors and double agents overseas who refuse to deal with anyone else after their arrival in the United States.

The CIA also gets involved in international counter intelligence, which has no geographical boundaries. It sometimes becomes necessary for the CIA to continue following a lead or checking a suspect in the United States.

Nor is it any secret that the CIA keeps track of both pro-Castro and anti-Castro Cuban nationals in this country, as part of its watch on Cuba. And the law gives the CIA authority to handle its own security, including background checks on American citizens.

Today's column is by Jack Anderson and Les Whitten