

U.S. Agencies Keep Close Watch On

Government files contain mountains of information on American citizens. In most cases, data goes into the files routinely, like when you answer the census, and is held in confidence. But in some cases, information is gathered into data banks and dossiers and then shared by federal agencies. This dispatch is based on a comprehensive study by the AP Special Assignment Team.

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WASHINGTON (AP)

Behind the closed door of Room 2439, a handful of government clerks search through radical newspapers, methodically snipping out names.

They are hunting Americans favorably mentioned by the publications of dissent.

Found, snipped, checked, reviewed, the names are conveyed down a wide clean corridor to be fed into a "subversive activities" data bank already bulging with names of 1.5 million citizens.

The name-hunters in Room 2439 are low-level servants of the Civil Service Commission, the agency set up to oversee federal employment.

The commission's security dossiers—not to be confused with its separate files on the 10 million persons who have sought federal jobs since 1939—are indicative of the watch the government keeps on Americans in this age of dissent and social turmoil.

An Associated Press study showed:

—Military intelligence agents have spied on civilian political activities and kept secret computerized files on thousands of individuals and organizations although Pentagon counsel cannot cite any law authorizing this surveillance.

List Kept

—The Army has kept a so-called blacklist which included the names, descriptions and pictures of civilians "who might be involved in civil disturbance situations."

—A second list has been circulated by the Pentagon's Counter-intelligence Analysis Division as a two-volume, yellow covered, looseleaf publication entitled "Organizations and Cities of Interest and Individuals of Interest"—according to a court suit.

—The FBI, with the most extensive security files and 194 million sets of fingerprints, has infiltrated the leadership of virtually every radical organization in the United States.

—Agents of the FBI, Naval intelligence and local police have seized citizens garbage in hunts for incriminating evi-

dence. In one case Navy agents examined garbage from an entire apartment house to find information about one tenant.

—The Secret Service has set up a computer with 100,000 names and 50,000 investigative dossiers on persons who it says could be dangerous to top government officials.

—A Senate subcommittee found that federal investigators have access to 264 million police records, 323 million medical histories and 279 million psychiatric dossiers. In each category, that's more numbers than there are people in the United States.

And the massive files of investigative and intelligence agencies contain but a small portion of the information the government collects on its citizens.

Millions of scraps of information go into federal files routinely when citizens pay their taxes, answer the census, contribute for social security, serve in the military, or apply for a passport.

Files Large

In fact, a Senate subcommittee calculated that the names of U.S. citizens appear 2.8 billion times in federal records. This means, the panel said, that the statistical odds are that a dozen different agencies have files on the typical law-abiding citizen.

Much of this data is held in strictest confidence. Census questionnaires, for example, can be inspected only by Census Bureau employees — and they're sworn to secrecy.

Federal income tax returns also are considered confidential by the IRS. But they may be seen by the heads of federal agencies, some congressional committees, the governors of every state and by a special counsel to President Nixon.

A proposal three years ago to gather files of all agencies into a National Data Bank and use them for statistical purposes kicked up such a furor in Congress that, according to one official, "now that issue is dead as a dodo."

But the AP study showed that investigative and intelligence agencies can—and do—share the information they gather.

For example, investigative agencies of the executive branch have access to the "subversive activities" data bank in the Civil Service Commission's downtown Washington headquarters.

According to an official commission publication, the data bank "at present... contains approximately 2.5 million index cards containing information relating to Communist and other subversive activities."

THE SUNDAY OREGONIAN,

Citizens In Time Of

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Dissent, Turmoil

The document adds: "No information is added to this file until it has been determined after careful review by a responsible official who is experienced in this field that an actual question of subversive activity is involved..."

A quick thumbing through the file discloses names like:

—Charles Garry, a white San Francisco attorney who represents the Black Panthers.

Robert Shelton, a leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

Staughton Lynd, a professor and radical writer.

—Robert DePugh, head of the Minutemen.

The files are kept as index cards in mechanized rotary cabinets. There are thick bundles of cards for some individuals, only one card for others. The cards do not state

anything about a person; they are more like a bibliography, citing publications which mention him.

Until evaluated, the clippings are considered "raw data" and are kept in other filing cabinets.

Name Included

One name in the raw data is that of William Kunstler, civil rights attorney who represent-

ed the defendants in the "Chicago 7" conspiracy trial and who faces a jail term for contempt of court.

Kimball Johnson, director of the commission's Bureau of Personnel Investigations, says the security file is kept up to date by 17 clerks, "experts in the field," who read Communist publications, the Black Panther newspaper, the free presses, underground papers and other publications such as The Guardian, Workers World, The Militant and Liberation News Service.

"We read these and clip the names of people supported by them," Johnson says. "It's all in the public domain. It's simply that unless you clip it

and file it there's no one mind that can comprehend it."

Section Chief Harold G. Pierce waves a hand toward a stack of publications on a table in his office and says: "That's what we check. It's full of subversive material. Note the Commie art. Picasso and others all tied in to Communism."

Asked to cite a statute or regulation authorizing the security file, Johnson replied there is no specific law. But, he added:

"The file is an essential tool to the commission's legal function of investigating the fitness of people for federal employment for security posi-

tions. And there is Public Law 298 which shifted responsibility for making personnel investigations from the FBI to the Civil Service Commission."

Case Referred

The commission says its security file aids in personnel investigations which give "the reasonable assurance that all persons privileged to be employed in . . . government are reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States."

It adds that when any subversive information from the security file is identified with

a person under investigation, the case is referred to the FBI for a full field loyalty probe.

The FBI has overall responsibility and broad powers—based on presidential directives dating back to 1939—for investigating matters relating to espionage, sabotage and violations of neutrality laws.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover told Congress last year his agency had placed informants and sources "at all levels including the top echelon" of such groups as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Ku Klux Klan, the Black Panther Party, the Republic of New

Africa, the Nation of Islam, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Minutemen and the Third national Conference on Black Power.

Hoover also gave a hint of the scope of FBI security files when he outlined how agents keep tabs on sympathizers who contribute money to radical causes.

"Included among these," he testified, "are a Cleveland industrialist who has long been a Soviet apologist, the wife of an attorney in Chicago who is a millionaire, an heiress in the New England area who is married to an individual prominent in the academic

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community who has been active in New Left activities, and a wealthy New York lecturer and writer who for years had been linked to more than a score of Communist-front organizations and has contributed liberally to many of them."

"These individuals alone have contributed more than \$100,000 in support of New Left activities."

Writers Tagged

Hoover also said agents have identified most of the writers of antiwar newspapers—which he termed "the work of the dedicated revolutionaries who are against ROTC and against our war effort in Vietnam"—and had referred that information to the Justice Department for possible prosecution.

Don Edwards, a member of a subcommittee which oversees FBI budget requests, complains that Congress does not exert proper authority over the FBI. He believes one reason for this is fear stemming from long-standing rumors that the FBI, among its many dossiers, has files on each member of Congress.

"There are lots of congressmen who think that probably they do have files," Edwards told an interviewer.

But the rumors have never been proven and there have been few complaints from congressmen.

There was, however, much alarm expressed in Congress with the recent disclosure that, for the past several years, military intelligence agents have conducted surveillance of civilian political activists and have fed information on individuals and organizations into data books.

In response to 50 congressional inquiries, the Army admitted that it:

—Kept a so-called blacklist which included the names and descriptions and pictures of civilians "who might be involved in civil disturbance situations."

—Operated a computer data bank for storage and retrieval of civil disturbance informa-



Associated Press Wirephoto

SMALL PORTION of files on some 1.5 million Americans favorably mentioned by publications of dissent is viewed by Kimball Johnson (left) and Harold G. Pierce in Washington. Johnson is director of the Civil Service Commission's Bureau of Personal Investigations and Pierce supervises clerks who read and clip publications for "Danger to Security" data bank.

tion. Used its intelligence agents in some instances for direct observation and infiltration of civilian organizations and political meetings.

But in making these admissions, the Army said that during the past year it has sharply curtailed such activities after realizing they weren't needed to prepare for any civil disturbances.

The Army said the blacklist—a term to which it objects—had been ordered withdrawn and destroyed. It said the computer data bank had been discontinued and that its

agents have conducted no covert operations in the civilian area during the past year.

Extensive details of the military's domestic intelligence activities were disclosed in January in an article written by a former intelligence officer, Christopher H. Pyle of New York, for the Magazine Washington Monthly.

Pyle wrote that the Army's Intelligence Command, headquartered at Ft. Holabird, Md., was in a position to develop one of the largest domestic intelligence operations outside the Communist world.

A few weeks later, the Pentagon announced that Ft. Holabird would be closed in an economy move and the Army Intelligence School there would be moved to Arizona.

An Army spokesman said the domestic surveillance operations were expanded in 1967 after the outbreak of serious civil disorders.

"There was a feeling we had to be in a position to predict when federal troops would be used again. We need more information to inform tactical commanders on the streets and to guide them. This led to wide-spread collection efforts," he said.

The information gathered by the military was funneled into Ft. Holabird, summerized and sent out on the Army's Teletype system.

One weekly summary, marked "Pass to DIA Elements," was distributed to Army commands throughout the world. It contained this dispatch:

Suit Filed

The Philadelphia chapter of the Women's Strike for Peace sponsored an anti-draft meeting at the First Unitarian Church which attracted an audience of about 200 persons. Conrad Lynn, an author of draft evasion literature, replaced Yale chaplain William Sloan Coffin as the principal speaker at the meeting.

Lynn, the Women's strike for Peace and a dozen other individuals and groups identi-

fied in the summary have filed suit through the American Civil Liberties Union claiming the Army has violated their constitutional rights of free speech and association.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, contends that in addition to the surveillance and computer operations the Army admits conducting, it is concealing from Congress the existence of:

—A large microfilm data bank on civilian political activity indexed by computer and maintained by the Counterintelligence Analysis Division.

—A second computerized domestic intelligence data bank maintained by the Continental Army Command at Ft. Monroe, Va., as well as extensive regional files at other locations.

—The "two-volume, yellow-covered, looseleaf publication entitled Counterintelligence Research Project: Organizations and Cities of Interest and Individuals of Interest, which describes numerous individuals and organizations unassociated with either the Armed Forces or with domestic disturbances."

The Army said it would not comment on the lawsuit's charges.

But, in an interview, a spokesman for the office of the Army's chief counsel could cite no legal basis for surveillance of civilian activities.

"In the civilian sphere the FBI has jurisdiction," the

spokesman said. "We must get approval for what we do from the FBI. There is no specific law on domestic intelligence as such applying to the Army."

To determine the range of domestic military surveillance, The Associated Press submitted a list of 20 questions to each branch of the service. Army spokesmen declined to answer the questions specifically, preferring to speak generally about the program. The Air Force said it does not have any domestic program. The Navy never responded.

But Navy intelligence operations slipped into public view last August when the ACLU complained that agents were sifting through garbage from the apartment house of Seaman Roger Lee Priest, accused by the Navy of soliciting members of military forces to desert in an underground newspaper he published.

A spokesman for the District of Columbia government acknowledged garbage from all apartments in the building where Priest lived was searched because it couldn't be separated from the seaman's prior to collection.

"We ended up with an ONI agent posing as a sanitation worker and picking up trash and bagging the garbage," he said. "Then the Civil Liberties union got in raising hell."

Searching citizens' garbage apparently is not uncommon for government security agencies.

Last summer a D.C. sanitation department official disclosed that the city, on request of investigators, makes up to a dozen special garbage collections yearly "in the interests of law and order."

Besides garbage, private mail also is often watched by government law enforcement agents.

The most commonly used means is the "mail cover," recording from a letter the name and address of the sender, the place and date of post-marking and the class of mail.

The Post Office declines to say how many mail covers are in effect. A Senate committee asked for a list of several years ago, but the agency objected.

"The list you have requested would contain the names of about 24,000 persons, a large percentage of whom are innocent of any crimes," a postal official said.

More recently, the Post office confirmed a new regulation allows federal agents to open all mail coming into this country from virtually every nation in the world.

"However," a spokesman said, "it's not intended to be used on personal mail."

When threatening letters are received by the President or other high government officials, the Secret Service moves into action.

Operating under guidelines adopted following President John F. Kennedy's assassination, the agency collects

"protective information", which is fed into its computers.

One of the 1963 guidelines asked other federal agencies to relay information on citizens who make abusive statements or attempt to "harm or embarrass" high government officials.

Civil libertarians objected that this guideline means that any citizen who writes a strongly worded letter of complaint to a government official might come under the agency's scrutiny.

A Secret Service spokesman responded: "At the time the guidelines were passed, emotions were high. Everyone was saying, 'Let's protect the President.' Now people are apparently forgetting the tragedy of that year . . ."

Several years ago when Congress was considering proposals to establish a National Data Bank to gather files from all agencies and use them for statistical purposes, author and sociologist Vance Packard raised the spectre of Big Brother, the symbolic leader of an all-seeing totalitarian government in George Orwell's book "1984."

Noting that the year 1984 would come in the next decade, Packard told a congressional committee:

"My own hunch is that Big Brother, if he ever comes to the United States, may turn out to be not a greedy seeker, but rather a relentless bureaucrat obsessed with efficiency."