

Destruction of Files Doubted by Tunney

San Diego

Senator John Tunney said yesterday that there is "a real question" whether the U.S. Army has followed a four-year-old directive to destroy its intelligence files on thousands of American civilians.* The files were compiled during the Vietnam war.

"There are some indications they have not been destroyed," Tunney said.

Tunney noted that the issue of whether the data was destroyed was first raised about two years ago during hearings called by the Senate constitutional rights subcommittee, which at that time was chaired by Senator Sam Ervin. Tunney is now the chairman of that committee.

Tunney said in a speech in San Diego yesterday that the subcommittee would, within a month, release a "frightening" report that would indicate that the executive branch of the federal government "consciously

* SEE THIS FILE
SFC 11 JAN 75

ly helped to build and orchestrate a shadowy surveillance industry operating at home and abroad."

After the speech Tunney was asked to elaborate on his remarks.

He said the Army had gathered information on thousands of American civilians and stored it in special vaults in Maryland. The civilians under surveillance were those believed by the Army to be "troublemakers and subversives," Tunney said.

The information on these civilians presumably was to be used in some way in the event of civil unrest, Tunney said.

Tunney noted that, during the Ervin subcommittee hearings, public testimony was offered that indicated that, in spite of denials by the Army, the Army had not in fact destroyed all of its intelligence files on civilians.

Asked whether some files still remained today, Tunney said that he did not know. But he added that there was a real question whether all the files were destroyed.

The point, Tunney said, is that Congress has no means of verifying whether the Army has in fact destroyed those files. He said he is hopeful that the newly created Senate intelligence committee will have the ability to oversee surveillance operations.