

British Newsmen Reveals Wiretaps

5/12/73 By Marilyn Berger
Washington Post Staff Writer

Henry Brandon, Washington correspondent of the London Sunday Times and author of two recent books on American foreign policy, said yesterday he was aware that his telephone was tapped on several occasions in 1969 and 1971.

The disclosure added another name to a growing list of reporters and government officials whose telephone conversations were under surveillance. The Washington Post reported May 3 that according to two highly placed sources in the executive branch at least two New York Times reporters' telephones were tapped in connection with the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers. A third Times reporter was also named by one of the Post's sources.

Yesterday The Times reported that "sources familiar with the operation" said that wire taps had also been placed on unidentified Washington Post reporters. The Times identified its two correspondents whose telephones were tapped as William Beecher, who now works at the Pentagon, and Hedrick Smith, currently the paper's Moscow correspondent.

Both Beecher and Smith wrote articles on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Smith also worked on the Pentagon Papers.

Brandon said yesterday that an article he wrote about SALT in May 1971 "contained a certain amount of exclusive material." He said: "This could have been one of the reasons for the wiretap." Brandon said he had also spoken on the telephone to Morton Halperin, a staff member of the National Security Council until September 1971. "This could have brought me to official attention," Brandon said.

It was disclosed Thursday at the Pentagon Papers trial of Daniel Ellsberg in Los Angeles that Halperin's home telephone was tapped for more than a year.

Halperin was apparently one of at least 10 White House staff members whose

phones were tapped, according to The Washington Post report of May 3. The Times yesterday said taps were placed on the phones of government officials suspected of "leaking" to reporters information believed damaging to national security.

Brandon said he suspected that his home telephone was tapped when he heard occasional clicks on the line and experienced delays in dialing. "I have always assumed that foreign correspondents' phones are tapped from time to time," he said yesterday.

In 1969, Brandon completed a book about the United States in Vietnam called "The Anatomy of Error." His latest book, a study of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy, is called "The Retreat of American Power." He has been in Washington 23 years for his newspaper.

The legality of "national security" wiretaps is an unsettled question. Last year the Supreme Court unanimously rejected Nixon administration claims to the right to conduct electronic surveillance without a court order in so-called "domestic subversion" cases. But the court left open whether the executive branch has such power in national security cases involving "foreign subversion."

The Times reported yesterday that John N. Mitchell, then the Attorney General, requested that J. Edgar Hoover, head of the F.B.I., install a series of wiretaps. Hoover reportedly refused saying he wanted written authorization.

Time Magazine, which first broke the story about the wiretapping, reported that Mitchell finally gave authorization and Hoover acquiesced, ordering the surveillance.

Later, Time reported and the Washington Post confirmed, when word got to Hoover that his ouster was being considered, the F.B.I. director suggested that he might want to talk about the wiretap operation.