

Nixon: Feud Led to Intelligence Plan

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Major intelligence gaps during 1970 and 1971 were claimed by President Nixon yesterday to have been the basis for White House actions that later became entangled in the Watergate scandal.

The President disclosed a concern over the performance of his intelligence agencies—particularly a high degree of friction between the FBI and CIA—of which the public was not aware at the time.

He specifically cited the refusal of the late J. Edgar Hoover to maintain liaison, first with the CIA, and later with any other agency except the White House in his final years as director of the FBI.

There have been disclosures, emerging in the context of the Watergate case, that Hoover's relationships with top administration officials grew progressively more stormy before his death. Hoover reportedly refused to go along with administration wiretap requests without written authorization.

Security Concerns

Domestic violence, the Pentagon Papers disclosures and news leaks on major negotiations all contributed to his growing concern with the need to strengthen security measures, the President asserted.

One byproduct of his concern was a domestic counter-espionage plane, disclosed yesterday on Capitol Hill, which would engage the entire intelligence community

—the CIA, FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency—in joint surveillance operations.

The plans, which has already drawn fire from Congress, was never implemented, the President noted. The reason, he said, was because Hoover opposed it.

"It was this unused plan and related documents that John Dean removed from the White House and placed in a safe deposit box, giving the keys to Judge Sirica. The same plan, still unused, is being headlined today," the President revealed.

Associates of Dean have suggested that the contents of the safe deposit box are "dynamic" that could be severely damaging to the Nixon administration.

Copies of the documents in Dean's custody have been turned over to Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), acting chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, by representatives of the Defense Department, CIA and FBI.

New Plan Detailed

The President gave the most complete public confirmation yet of the newly disclosed counter espionage plan that he said was vetoed by Hoover.

It had been approved, he said, by an interagency intelligence committee on June 25, 1970, and recinded a month later because of the former FBI directors' opposition.

It provided for "resumption of certain intelligence operations which had been

suspended in 1966." This was presumed by one knowledgeable official to refer to special surveillance authority over suspected foreign agents.

The plan also included, the President said, "authorization for surreptitious entry—breaking and entering, in effect—against suspected national security violators."

The President's confirmation of the plan may serve to take the steam out of later disclosures by critical senators or by Dean himself of the controversial blueprint which Mr. Nixon emphasized "never went into effect."

Through 1970, the President asserted, "coordination among our intelligence agencies continued to fall short of our national security needs."

Evaluation Panel

Then the President unexpectedly gave out the information: "In July, 1970, having earlier discontinued the FBI's liaison with the CIA, Director Hoover ended the FBI's normal liaison with all other agencies except the White House."

As a counter-measure to Hoover's cutoff of liaison with CIA, an Intelligence Evaluation Committee was created in December 1960 to prepare estimates of "domestic intelligence."

"I understand that its activities are now under investigation," the President said. "I did not authorize nor do I have any knowledge of any illegal activity by this committee. If it went be-

yond its charter and did engage in any illegal activities, it was totally without my knowledge or authority."

This was the first public reference to any such investigation.

Mr. Nixon also said his concern for national security was the basis for instructions to his top aides, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, which have led to disclosures of White House pressures on the CIA in the Watergate scandal.

It was disclosed in Senate hearings last week that Haldeman and Ehrlichman instructed the CIA to tell the FBI that an investigation of Watergate money in Mexico would jeopardize covert agency operations.

Symington said Monday that Haldeman told CIA Deputy Director Gen. Vernon A. Walters "it was the President's wish" that he submit the proposal to FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III.

In explanation of the episode, the President said yesterday he was "deeply concerned" that neither covert CIA operations nor activities of the White House "plumbers" team be compromised.

"Therefore, I instructed Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman to ensure that the investigation of the (Watergate) break-in not expose either an unrelated covert operation of the CIA or the activities of the White House investigations unit . . ."

"It was certainly not my intent, nor my wish, that the investigation of the Water-

gate break-in or of unrelated acts be impeded in any way," the President asserted.

According to the sworn account of Walters, his first awareness of the White House concern over the Mexican fund investigation was an express directive from Haldeman and Ehrlichman on June 23, 1972 to tell Gray that the FBI inquiry would damage CIA activities.

Request Refused

Walters and former CIA Director Richard M. Helms refused to go along with the White House request when they quickly determined that no CIA activities would be endangered by the FBI's inquiry into the Watergate scandal's Mexican connection.

The President acknowledged that he initially suspected that the CIA was involved in the Watergate break-in and bugging. Early reports on the case, he added, "led me to surmise, correctly, that since persons originally recruited for covert national security activities had participated in Watergate, an unrestricted investigation of Watergate might lead to and expose those covert national security operations."

He said he told Haldeman and Ehrlichman to be sure the FBI not carry its investigation into areas that might compromise national security.