

Justice to Abolish Intelligence Panel

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The Justice Department is taking steps to abolish the Intelligence Evaluation Committee, a secret domestic intelligence unit established in December, 1970, which is now under investigation by the Senate select committee looking into the Watergate affair.

Although the IEC was headquartered in the Justice Department, its existence was unknown to many top officials at Justice until President Nixon referred to it in a public statement on Watergate last week.

As described by Mr. Nixon, the IEC membership included representatives of the White House, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency, Secret Service and

the Departments of Justice, Treasury and Defense.

He said it was established to "help remedy" the situation created when the late J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the FBI, broke off liaison with all agencies except the White House.

Justice Department sources said yesterday that Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen, chief of the department's Criminal Division, learned of the IEC's existence—through inquiries from the Senate committee—only a few days before the President's statement.

So carefully was it concealed that until then, Petersen was apparently unaware that he had inherited the IEC's small staff in late

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March, when Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst abolished the department's Internal Security Division and transferred its responsibilities to a new section of the Criminal Division.

The sources said that Petersen immediately called for copies of the IEC's classified reports, on such subjects as foreign influence in the peace movement, and found them "worthless."

On checking with the IEC's member agencies, Petersen discovered that "they didn't care" whether the committee continued to exist, the sources added.

As a result, Petersen is drafting an order dismantling the IEC and assigning its employees to other jobs.

The sources said, however, that Petersen has decided to retain "on a standby basis" the Inter-Divisional Information Unit (IDIU), a related group originally established by Ramsey Clark, President Johnson's last Attorney General, and kept by the Nixon administration, to monitor the

potential for domestic civil disturbances.

There was apparently considerable overlap between the two intelligence units, and sources close to the Senate investigation say that the IDIU may have been used to help conceal the IEC.

The IEC originally drew the attention of Senate investigators when they learned that convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. had received copies of IEC reports while working as security director for the Committee for the re-election of the President.

Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.), the Watergate committee member who has pressed the investigation of the IEC, said yesterday that the reports apparently went only to Mr. Nixon's re-election committee, under a special arrangement, and were not distributed on a bipartisan basis.

Several sources in the Justice Department and on Capitol Hill yesterday confirmed a department spokes-

man's insistence that the IEC "has never been an operational unit," but merely collated data collected by its member agencies. The group collected no information of its own, they said.

The former FBI agent who now heads the IEC, Bernard A. Wells Jr., declined to discuss its functions with a reporter, but other Justice Department officials said that the IEC concentrated on "writing papers" at the specific request of the White House and other government agencies.

It was created in December, 1970, they said, at the suggestion of close presiden-

tial aides, including former chief White House domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman, and brought into the Internal Security Division while Robert C. Mardian was assistant attorney general in charge there.

(Mardian left Justice last year to join the Nixon campaign and has since returned to his family's construction business in Phoenix. He has been questioned by the Watergate grand jury here and will meet privately with Senate investigators Friday.)

The IEC is housed on the sixth floor of the Federal Triangle Building on 9th

Street NW under strict security arrangements.

According to the Justice Department sources, the IEC sought, among other things, to predict the size of public demonstrations and to measure their potential for violence—as part of the development of the government's response to them.

But on some occasions, they added, the IEC may have dabbled in foreign intelligence matters and may have contributed information for use in the Justice Department's prosecution of cases with political overtones, such as the Pentagon Papers trial of Daniel Ells-

berg and Anthony J. Russo Jr.

Senate sources suggested that the IEC grew out of an intense concern for national security on the part of some Nixon administration officials and that its reports could have been used to develop and justify the work of the White House "plumbers," who included convicted Watergate conspirators E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy.

Weicker said he is puzzled about why, if the IEC's work was as simple as has been described, it was considered necessary to "camouflage" the unit.