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Ex-FBI Men Tell of Files On Congress

By Ronald Kessler
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Washington

During J. Edgar Hoover's reign, the FBI compiled files containing information on the personal lives of Senators and congressmen, two former high-ranking FBI officials have told the Washington Post.

Cartha D. DeLoach, assistant to Hoover until 1970, and Louis B. Nichols, who held the same position until 1957, said the files contained data on the girl friends and drinking problems of congressmen as well as other personal information, characterized by DeLoach as "junk."

Both men said the information, which was kept in the FBI's general files, was not gathered for purposes of political blackmail and did not result from direct surveillances of members of Congress unless they were

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targets of criminal investigations.

Rather, they said, the information was placed in congressmen's files after persons interviewed by the FBI on unrelated matters had volunteered it.

They said they knew of no instance of leaking the information to the press.

Although the two former FBI officials had no firsthand information of current FBI practices, a senior agent who asked that his name not be used said the bureau continues to collect such information.

"If I find a congressman has a girl stashed (in some city), I'd report it to the SAC (special agent in charge of that city)," he said.

DeLoach and Nichols said they could not estimate how

many FBI files on members of Congress contained such information, since they had not seen them all.

But another source said he had seen information of a personal nature gathered by the FBI on Senators Mike Mansfield (Dem-Mont.), Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (Rep-Conn.), Abraham A. Ribicoff (Dem-Conn.), George McGovern (Dem-S.D.), Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.), Adlai E. Stevenson III (Dem-Ill.), and Representatives Carl Albert (Dem-Okla.), Wilbur D. Mills (Dem-Ark.) and the late Hale Boggs (Dem-La.).

The source said that in one instance Hoover had ordered derogatory information gathered on the personal life of former Representative William R. Anderson (Dem-Tenn.) after Anderson criticized Hoover for his statements about the Berri-gan brothers.

FBI spokesman James Murphy, asked if the FBI keeps such files, declined to comment, and a request for an interview with FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley was denied.

Murphy said, however, that derogatory information volunteered on anyone, including a member of Congress, would be recorded.

Murphy declined to answer further questions.

Members of Congress have long suspected, and periodically charged, that the FBI was compiling personal information on them. Although the charges were never proved, the suspicions, fed by rumors that Hoover supplied the information to the White House, were widely acknowledged

to be a factor in Hoover's long tenure as director of the FBI.

Informed in general terms of the Post's findings, several members of Congress said the FBI's denial that it purposely gathers the information and does not use it for political blackmail is not relevant.

The mere existence of such files, they said, represents a lever against Congress, because it has the potential to be used for political blackmail.

"There's no point in its being there if they are not

going to use it," said Senator Gale W. McGee (Dem-Wyo.), a member of the Appropriations Committee, which has control over the FBI budget.

"Obviously it's to be in reserve for some kind of blackmail," McGee said. "The Gestapo operated that way too. They were just collecting records."

Senator Alan Cranston (Dem-Calif.) said he cannot think of any legitimate reason for keeping such information. "It's a threat even if it is just there and not leaked or gathered for blackmail," he said.

"I think the FBI has one function, and that's to enforce the law," said Senator Walter F. Mondale (Dem-Minn.). "Maintaining unevaluated materials on people who are not suspected of federal crime is a dangerous procedure."

"If the facts contained in the Post article are true," Senator Kennedy said, "they indicate that the constitutional rights of members of the legislative branch have clearly been infringed by the executive branch."

"The article," he said, "is in direct conflict with testimony of the FBI before the Senate Judiciary Committee and calls into question the legality of FBI practices."

Kennedy and other senators recalled that L. Patrick Gray III, who was named acting FBI director by President Nixon a day after Hoover's death, denied such files existed.

In a widely publicized magazine interview Gray declared shortly after taking office that he had looked and found no "evidence whatsoever of the existence of secret files or political dossiers."

Representative Robert W. Kastenmeier (Dem-Wis.) said his Administration of Justice Subcommittee would look into the alleged FBI practice of keeping files on members of Congress.

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