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President's Sources of Information

To the Editor:

As an aide responsible for helping to keep the President informed of news and opinion in the American media, I found the unequivocal assertion of Vanderbilt Prof. Harry Howe Ransom's assault [Op-Ed article Dec. 26] on the American intelligence community somewhat amusing. Wrote the Professor in his first paragraph:

"Nashville—During the height of the Middle East crisis, President Nixon relied for information exclusively on his intelligence bureaucracy. He did not watch television and no more than scanned the morning newspapers. His information came from the intelligence establishment."

The first and third sentences are wholly false; the second grossly misleading.

Every day, at eight in the morning, President Nixon receives on his desk, hand-delivered from this office, a Presidential news summary running to fifty pages of typewritten copy, containing dozens of wire stories, summaries and condensations of columns and editorials from half a hundred newspapers, a lengthy report on three network news shows the evening before, and between 500 and 1,000 words of guidance on the major news stories that morning in seven

Eastern papers plus The Chicago Tribune.

Each week the President receives within that summary batches of editorial cartoons, full reports on all network specials and documentaries, and a two-part magazine report drawn from over thirty periodicals.

No interruption of this daily service to the President took place during the recent Middle East crisis.

Since this daily news summary is no secret to the national press corps; since it has been the subject of syndicated columns and major features by C.B.S., Time and U.P.I., one wonders how its existence escaped the notice of that crack intelligence network which keeps Professor Ransom, down there in Nashville, so well informed on what the President is reading up here in Washington.

The quantity of misinformation Professor Ransom packed into his opening paragraph underscores the need for political science professors—even as Presidents—to be constantly on their guard against the natural tendency to "isolate" themselves from the mainstream of American life.

PATRICK J. BUCHANAN
Special Assistant to the President
Washington, Dec. 29, 1970

Nixon's Information Sources

To the Editor:

Patrick J. Buchanan, Special Assistant to President Nixon, asserts in a letter published Jan. 8 that my Op-Ed article of Dec. 26 contains false statements about the President's sources of information.

Mr. Buchanan's letter has not entirely convinced me of having erred. I confess to some lack of clarity in my essay about whom I would include under the term intelligence "establishment" or "bureaucracy." As Mr. Buchanan explains his role, I would include him as part of the intelligence "bureaucracy" although he is not a member of the intelligence "community."

I apologize to readers for possibly misleading assertions in my essay, but I stick to the thrust of my argument. In detailing the President's sources of information, note that Mr. Buchanan stresses that his office supplies the President with summaries and condensations from newspapers, radio and TV, and periodicals. Part of my argument is that those in the intelligence bureaucracy who select and digest information and opinions can shape the Presidential picture of the outside world.

But Mr. Buchanan concerns himself only with my first paragraph, which was merely illustrative of the "intelligence establishment" problem as I define it. The more important part of my argument dealt with the dangers of an intelligence system operating outside of legitimate policy controls.

Events of recent months, especially disclosures of improper armed service intelligence surveillance of domestic politics, seem to authenticate my concerns. I am disappointed that Mr. Buchanan had not a word to say—even if to correct my information—about the main thrust of my argument.

HARRY HOWE RANSOM
Professor and Chairman
Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Jan. 9, 1971