

F.B.I. INVESTIGATES STATE DEPT. LEAKS

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Agents Question Personnel
— Use of Lie-Detectors
on Officials Reported

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By FRED P. GRAHAM

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 2 — State Department personnel are being questioned by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in an effort to determine how recent sensitive information leaked to the press, the department's press spokesman disclosed today.

The spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, said in response to reporters' questions at a press briefing, that the investigation had been prompted by concern that "stories harmful to the national interest" were being disclosed by unauthorized persons.

He repeatedly declined to make a denial when asked about reports that F.B.I. agents were giving State Department officials lie-detector tests in efforts to locate the sources of the news leaks.

Mr. McCloskey said the F.B.I. questioning was being done "with the approval of the Secretary of State," but he declined to say who had ordered it. Powell Moore, an official in the Justice Department's information office, said that the investigation had been ordered

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by that department's Internal Security Division.

Mr. Moore said that such action was taken whenever there was evidence of violations of the Federal security laws, and that the current questioning had extended to other departments, including the Pentagon. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is an agency of the Justice Department.

The questioning by F.B.I. and the reported use of lie-detectors has touched sensitive nerves in the State Department, where, officials say, the bureau has not been active since it investigated charges of Communist infiltration raised the late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy two decades ago. The State Department has its own security force that is supposed to investigate security leaks.

In recent weeks newsmen who report on the State Department have found that people there would not see them or answer their telephone calls. Today, at his regular noon briefing, Mr. McCloskey was asked a series of questions about the investigation and other official actions that have apparently prompted officials to close their doors to the press.

Taboos Conceded

Mr. McCloskey conceded that certain subjects had been temporarily placed off limits for discussion with the press by State Department personnel. These include President Nixon's coming trip to China and the one-man election campaign of South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu.

But Mr. McCloskey insisted, "I have told them that people need not close doors or refuse to return phone calls because a subject for a period may be off limits for general distribution." He said there had been no efforts to limit "contacts" between State Department personnel and the press, but only to persuade officials to "use

their common sense in dealing with the journalists."

"The State Department has a deep concern, and I would expect the public in general would understand, that information that could be prejudicial to the national interest in foreign policy is not to be published or broadcast," Mr. McCloskey said.

Times Article Mentioned

He said that F.B.I. agents had approached State Department officials "on a number of occasions," but he would not say what news articles had been involved.

Some individuals who were questioned said that the agents asked about an article by William Beecher in The New York Times of July 22, giving details of United States negotiators' positions in the arms limitations talks with the Soviet Union.

Others were asked about an earlier article by Tad Szulc in The New York Times about arms shipments to Pakistan.

Mr. McCloskey said, "To the best of my knowledge, no disciplinary action has been taken against any person questioned." Asked if a reprimand or notation placed in a Foreign Service officer's record was a disciplinary action, he said that such a reprimand would not necessarily be considered a disciplinary action.

He declined to say if officials had been asked to sign affidavits saying whether they had talked to certain reporters.