

'Purge' of Files

Army Spying on Civilians Limited

Washington

Sensitive to charges that it has been spying on civilians, the Army appears to have reduced its counter-intelligence activity and ordered a "purge" of some of the seven million counter-intelligence files it maintains at Ft. Holabird, Md.

This came to light yesterday with the disclosure by Capitol Hill sources of a letter sent by Major General Kenneth G. Wickham, the Army's Adjutant General, to all major domestic commands.

The letter spells out "situations warranting collection of counter-intelligence information on civilians" and explicitly declares: "Individuals and organizations do not become of concern to the Department of The Army solely because they oppose Government charges."

"Action will be taken," the letter says, "to purge all files of information, the storage of which is not authorized by this letter."

Wickham's letter is dated Dec. 15, 1970, and follows charges that soldiers in Illi-

nois kept surveillance on the activities of Senator Adlai E. Stevenson III, Representative Abner D. Nikva, and former Illinois Governor, Otto Kerner, all liberal Democrats.

LATITUDE

Despite the ground rules it spells out, Wickham's letter gives local commanders latitude in assigning projects to counter-intelligence units.

For example, it specifically permits the collection of data on "attempts to subvert loyalty, discipline or morale" of military or civilian personnel on the Defense Department's payroll.

Presumably, this would permit surveillance of coffee houses operated by anti-war groups near Army bases. The directive also permits surveillance of "unauthorized demonstrations or activities" on or near Army facilities.

OUTCOME

After listing such instances where counter-intelligence activities may be authorized, the letter says:

"If information which does not fall within the scope of the list is received it may not

be "processed" or "stored."

After the incident which provoked the counter-intelligence activity has ended, the directive said, the collected information must be destroyed except for one copy for the U.S. Army investigative records repository at Fort Holabird.

There, according to a Feb. 25, 1970, letter from Robert E. Jordan III, the Army's General Counsel, to Ervin, the Army "has approximately 7 million files relating principally to security loyalty or criminal investigations of former and present members of the Army, civilian employees and contractor personnel."

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