

Laird Picks Panel to Curb Army Spying on Civilians

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 18 — The formation of a high level, civilian-dominated board to assume direct control of investigations in country by military intelligence operatives was announced today by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.

The Secretary indicated that he was concerned about indications that the military at times had been overzealous in spying on antiwar and civil rights leaders in gathering information on potential urban riots.

He issued a directive calling for tighter civilian control of a program that he said "protects the national security interest while insuring the con-

stitutional, civil and private rights" of individuals and organizations.

Mr. Laird established a five-man Defense Investigative Review Council under Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert F. Froehlke, to "direct, manage and inspect" all domestic intelligence by the military. This activity was previously conducted by the armed services independently.

The other members of the new board are the civilian Under Secretaries of the Army, Thaddeus R. Beal; Navy, John W. Warner; and Air Force John L. McLucas; and the

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director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieut. Gen. Donald V. Bennett. The council will report directly to Mr. Laird.

The Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, headed by Sam J. Ervin, Democrat of North Carolina, will begin hearings Tuesday on the question of whether military and other Federal agencies have violated individual rights in amassing and placing into computer data banks unevaluated information on the activities of American citizens.

As he named the new intelligence council, Mr. Laird also reversed his action of Dec. 23 in putting the Defense Intelligence Agency in charge of domestic investigations and calling for this agency to report directly to him on all intelligence matters, foreign and domestic, rather than through the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Whether the agency might later be ordered to report to Mr. Laird directly, instead of to the Joint Chiefs, on overseas intelligence is a matter still under study, Mr. Froehlke said in a Pentagon news conference.

Mr. Froehlke refused to get into specific allegations of abuses by the military in in-



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Robert F. Froehlke as he discussed review board.

vestigations between 1967 and 1969 but said he was convinced that abuses had occurred and that the blame must be shared by both military and civilian leaders.

The biggest "culprit," he

said, was the political climate following the 1967 Detroit riots when the Johnson Administration became alarmed about potential riots all over the country.

His investigation convinced him, he said, that civilian officials ordered a "reluctant" military to conduct investigations in specific communities, but once involved, "the military over-reacted." "But as to a grand conspiracy, I have found no grand conspiracy."

Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, in a letter to Representative Ogden R. Reid, Republican of Westchester, conceded that Army intelligence reports had included the names of Illinois Democrats, including Senator Adlai E. Stevenson 3d, as previously alleged. But he insisted these were in the form of newspaper clippings and reports of speeches rather than any effort to develop detailed dossiers on prominent political figures.

Mr. Froehlke said the Defense Department would soon issue specific guidelines aimed at insuring that the military does not exceed its authority in gathering information on possible civil disturbances.

But 90 per cent or more of domestic military investiga-

tions, he said, will continue to focus on security investigations of individuals who are to be given access to classified documents and in connection with protecting military installations.

According to Mr. Froehlke, Mr. Laird's first inclination was that to get control of domestic intelligence he would assign responsibility to the Defense Intelligence Agency and order that military agency to report directly to him.

After study, Mr. Laird decided that civilian control would be better served by creation of a civilian-dominated board to oversee this activity.