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New Rules for Domestic Spies

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Formation of a high level, civilian-dominated board to assume direct control of domestic investigations by military intelligence operatives was announced yesterday by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.

The move came after mounting concern that the military at times had been "overzealous" in spying on thousands of anti-war and civil rights leaders in gather-

ing information on potential urban riots.

The Laird directive called for tighter civilian control of a program that "protects the national security interest while ensuring the constitutional civil and private rights" of individuals and organizations.

He established a five-man defense investigative review council — headed by Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert F. Froehlke — to "di-

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rect, 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 undersecretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force and the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General Donald V. Bennett. The council will report directly to Laird.

The Senate subcommittee on constitutional rights, headed by Senator Sam J. Ervin (Dec-N.C.) will begin hearings Tuesday on whether military and other federal agencies have violated individual rights in amassing and placing into computer data banks unevaluated information of the activities of American citizens.

As he named the new intelligence council, Laird also reversed his action of December 23 in putting the DIA 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 DIA might later be ordered to report to Laird directly, instead of to the Joint Chiefs, on overseas intelligence is a matter still under study, Froehlke said in a Pentagon news conference.

Froehlke refused to get into specific allegations of abuses by the military in investigation between 1967 and 1969, but said he was convinced abuses did occur and the blame must be shared by both military and civilian leaders.

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The biggest "culprit," he said, was the political cli-

mate 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 that once involved, "the military over-reacted."

"But . . . I have found no grand conspiracy."

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

But 90 per cent or more of domestic military investigations, he said, will continue to concentrate on security probes of individuals who are to be given access to classified documents and in connection with protecting military installations.