

NO 5-1, 17 Oct 72

Nixon's 'dirty tricks' gang out to embarrass columnist

WASHINGTON — Men in power don't relish having their cozy relationships exposed, and their sources of money bared, and their errors and embarrassments publicized.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Nixon Administration doesn't like this column. So the President's dirty tricks depart-

Jack Anderson

ment tried to play a few tricks on us.

The dirty tricks operation, otherwise known as the "Offensive Security Program of the Nixon Forces," was established chiefly to bewitch and befoul Democratic presidential candidates. It was funded out of a secret, fluctuating Republican slush fund.

The Washington Post has charged that the dirty tricks included forging phony letters to embarrass the Democrats, leaking false information to the press, tailing family members of Democratic presidential candidates and throwing campaign schedules into disarray.

Watergate incident

The Watergate incident — breaking into Democratic party headquarters, tapping party leaders' telephones and stealing party documents — was part of this sordid operation.

In our case, the dirty tricks were pulled by political operatives and government gumshoes alike. Their objective, apparently, was two-fold: (1) to discredit the column by undermining our credibility; and (2) to shut off our sources.

A host of investigators participated in the project. Government agents, watching through binoculars from a nearby knoll, staked out my house. With walkie-talkies, they directed waiting government security cars to tail me wherever I went. Sources inside the Justice Department provided me with the descriptions and license numbers of the cars so it didn't take long to locate them lurking in hiding places near my home.

McCord's Report

The President's campaign security chief, James W. McCord Jr., joined in the investigation. In an "Interim Report" to the White House, he accused me of "close association with the operating arm of the Democratic party." Ironically, a Democratic party spokesman later accused me of close association with McCord's operation after we published an embarrassing memo from party files.

Sources inside the White House, meanwhile, warned us of attempts to discredit the column. Not long afterward, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs called a press conference. We were tipped off that the bureau would challenge our story about Thailand's great opium hoax.

The Thai authorities with considerable whoop-de-doo staged a million-dollar opium burning to dramatize how they were cooperating with the U. S. crackdown on drugs. We reported, however, that they really burned cheap fodder mixed with opium.

Nixon aides went to elaborate lengths to knock the story down. They prepared pages of refutation for the press, set up a movie of the opium burning and produced an "expert" to testify how wrong we were.

But thanks to our advance tip, my associate Les Whitten showed up at the press conference with a stack of secret CIA documents and detailed notes from other documents. He quoted evidence right from the government's secret files that the Thais had burned fodder instead of pure opium. An administration spokesman sheepishly admitted that Uncle Sam had paid a cool \$1 million for the ashes.

Air Force attack

More recently, the Pentagon furnished the editors of Air Force Magazine with material for a blistering attack on us. They challenged our report about Air Force research on a laser beam that would explode the eyeballs of enemy soldiers at a distance of more than a mile. Blinded soldiers, the research noted, would be more of a burden to a fighting force than dead soldiers.

We based our story on a copy of the actual study, which speaks more than five times of the violent effects of laser beams on eyeballs. Twice, the study cites "massive blast" effects; in another place, it tells of a "micro-explosion" in the eyes. The water fluids in the eyes, adds the study, would "rise to about 100 degrees Centigrade"—the boiling point.

Although we had a copy of the study, we also contacted two Air Force researchers at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base where the research was reviewed. They would confirm only that they had been involved in classified research on laser weapons.

Finally, we located the physician-researcher, Dr. Milton Zaret, who directed the study for the Air Force. To make sure our story was absolutely accurate, we read it back to him word-for-word. He suggested a few minor technical changes, which we made.