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Wiretap Files Were Kept From Hoover, Aide Says

By Jack Nelson
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Wiretap files located by the FBI in a White House safe were kept from J. Edgar Hoover because he was "not of sound mind" in his last years, William H. Sullivan, former FBI assistant director said yesterday.

Sullivan said that because the late FBI director "could not be trusted" to keep the files confidential Sullivan turned them over to Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian before Hoover forced Sullivan to retire from the FBI on Oct. 6, 1971.

Sullivan, now director of the Justice Department's Office of National Narcotics Intelligence, said John N. Mitchell, who was Attorney General at the time, ordered that the files be given to Mardian.

Acting FBI Director William B. Ruckelshaus quoted Mardian as saying he transferred the files after Sullivan warned that Hoover "might use the records in some manner" against President Nixon and Mitchell.

Ruckelshaus said Sullivan did not "affirm" Mardian's claim in a statement to the FBI. But Sullivan said in an interview he and Mardian did agree that Hoover might use the files for "some ill-conceived purpose" against government officials. "I don't specifically remember mentioning the President," Sullivan said, "but we certainly had the President in mind."

Sullivan, who feuded with Hoover over FBI policy mat-

ters in the last few years before the director's death in May, 1972, said that the wiretap records were never a part of the FBI's officially recorded files.

"Hoover didn't want the records in the official file," Sullivan said. "He told me to keep them myself and have them ready for him, available any time he wanted them. I had them in a file cabinet in my office, but they were never serialized or recorded in the FBI files."

Sullivan said that when Justice Department officials who knew of the wiretap records learned he was leaving "they were very upset and understandably because they could no longer depend on Hoover. He had been leaking stuff all over the place. He could no longer be trusted. So I was instructed to pass the records to Mardian."

Hoover, who had been under considerable criticism for his administration of the FBI was concerned about being fired as director and kept the records "to keep Mitchell and the others in line," Sullivan said.

"That fellow was a master blackmailer and he did it with considerable finesse despite the deterioration of his mind," Sullivan said.

"He always did that sort of thing. The moment he would get something on a senator he'd send one of the errand boys up and advise the senator that we're in the course of an investigation and we by chance happened

to come up with this data on your daughter. But we wanted you to know this—we realize you'd want to know it. But don't have any concern, no one will ever learn about it. Well, Jesus, what does that tell the senator? From that time on the senator's right in his pocket."

Sullivan said that neither Mitchell nor Mardian ever specifically told him that they did not want Hoover to have the files because he could not be trusted. But Sullivan said he could "read this between the lines."

"Neither Mardian nor Mitchell trusted him but they didn't want to say that," Sullivan said. "Hoover wasn't of sound mind — as a matter of fact a high administration official once said Hoover had been of unsound mind for the past few years. Everybody who had anything to do with Hoover knew that he was no longer rational. He was doing the strangest things, like going into a rage."

Sullivan said that before being forced to retire he argued vigorously with Hoover over several matters, including an order that FBI officials have "absolutely nothing to do with" The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post and The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

"I took issue with him on that one and told him in a letter that you cannot do that in a free society," Sullivan said.