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Secret Memos Acknowledged

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The White House acknowledged yesterday the authenticity of published top-secret documents from the 1970 domestic political surveillance plan approved personally by President Nixon.

A White House spokesman termed publication of the classified memoranda in The New York Times "unfortunate" but said there were no plans to act against the man who removed them from the White House, former counsel to the president John W. Dean III.

The key document—a "decision memorandum" listing presidentially approved measures—authorized intensified bugging and tapping of "individuals and groups" threatening "internal security." It was also aimed at foreign nationals and embassies in the United States.

Still under wraps is a 43-page report compiled by President Nixon's Interagency Group on Domestic Intelligence which recommended the master plan for political surveillance of radical groups, campuses, black revolutionaries and foreign nationals.

The "decision memorandum" ordered removal of restrictions on postal surveillance—"mail covers"—as well as breaking into the premises—"surreptitious entry"—of those suspected of being national security risks.

President Nixon disclosed some of the chief ingredients of the 1970 surveillance plan in a statement on May 22. The President alluded specifically to the "surreptitious entry" provision.

He emphasized that the plan was not put into effect because of objections by Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover.

The documents published by The New York Times show that the President approved, virtually intact, the recommendations submitted by an interagency committee he established in June, 1970, because of his expressed dissatisfaction with existing domestic security intelligence.

The interagency memorandum explicitly acknowledged the illegal nature of covert mail surveillance and break-ins.

However, the intelligence benefits of mail covers outweighed the "serious risks" of public disclosure, the memo said. And break-ins, though "highly risky" and potentially a source of great embarrassment if exposed, would serve as a "most fruitful tool" in domestic intelligence gathering, the task force asserted.

Mr. Nixon in his May 22 statement said the plan was approved on July 23 but rescinded five days later because of Hoover's opposition.

The classification of the documents—"TOP SECRET handle via Comint Channels Only"—meant that they were accessible to less than 50 persons in the government, according to one intelligence specialist. "Comint" stands for communications intelligence. Material so classified is kept in special safes and always escorted by special courier when it is out of safe-keeping.

Two of the memoranda portray, in openly disparaging terms, the opposition of the late FBI director to the recommendations of the interagency group.

An "analysis and strategy" memo prepared by former White House staff assistant on domestic security Tom Charles Huston said Hoover's objections "are generally inconsistent and frivolous—most express concern about possible embarrassment to the intelligence community [i.e. Hoover] from public disclosure of clandestine operations."

At another point Huston remarked that "Mr. Hoover should be called in privately for a stroking session at which the President explains the decision he has made, thanks Mr. Hoover for his candid advice and past cooperation and indicates he is counting on Edgar's cooperation in implementing" the proposals.

Huston counseled that the President should not . . . be reluctant to overrule Mr. Hoover's objections."

As it turned out, the President bowed to Hoover's op-

position and replaced Huston in the domestic security area with Dean.

President Nixon, in disclosing the existence of the 1970 intelligence plan on May 22, noted that "the relationships between the FBI and other intelligence agencies had been deteriorating." By July, 1970, he said, the FBI director — having previously cut off contacts with the CIA — had gone on to end liaison with all agencies except the White House.

The four documents published by The Times include the recommendations of the interagency committee, the Huston analysis, the "decision memorandum," and a final memo on the organization and operation of the Interagency Group on Domestic Intelligence and Internal Security.

This set of documents, plus other material including the full 43-page report, was part of the cache of classified matter removed from the White House by Dean and turned over to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica, the trial judge in the Watergate case. Copies were turned over to the Senate Armed Service Committee, the Senate select committee investigating the Watergate case and the Watergate prosecutors.

The report and proposals were drafted in a domestic political climate that was agitated by U.S. military incursions into Cambodia and the Kent State University incident.

"The campus is the battleground of the revolutionary protest movement," the interagency memo said. "It is impossible to gather effec-

tive intelligence about the movement unless we have campus sources."

It was also asserted that "everyone knowledgeable in the field, with the exception of Mr. Hoover concurs that [electronic surveillance and infiltration] coverage is grossly inadequate."

Huston singled out former CIA Director Richard M. Helms as having been "most cooperative and helpful" in the meetings of the interagency group. ". . . The only stumbling block was Mr. Hoover."

The interagency group was composed of Helms, former Defense Intelligence Agency Director Donald V. Bennett, Adm. Noel Gayler, former head of the National Security Agency, and Hoover, who was named chairman.

Hoover's decreasing use of bugging and infiltration of suspected subversive organizations in the later years of his directorship was

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cited by President Nixon in his May 22 speech, although the President did not mention these specific measures.

These policies of Hoover were also a matter of controversy within the FBI. At least one of Hoover's deputies, William C. Sullivan, advocated more forceful activities in dealing with radical groups and individual leaders.

One of the objectives of the 1970 plan was to reinstitute stronger intelligence measures, specifically in the areas of electronic surveillance, infiltration and mail covers.

In the "decision memorandum," signed by Huston, it was stated that "the President is aware that procedural problems may arise in the course of implementing these decisions. However he is anxious that such problems be resolved with maximum speed and minimum misunderstanding."