

Memo Says F.B.I. Sought Cambodia Article's Source

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WASHINGTON, April 23—J. Edgar Hoover, the late Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, ordered the bureau in 1969 to use its confidential informants within news organizations to determine the source of an article in The New York Times reporting secret American bombing raids on Cambodia, according to a memorandum from Mr. Hoover to his top associates.

The document, dated May 9, 1969, has never been made public, but it was provided by the bureau to lawyers representing Morton H. Halperin, the former National Security Council aide whose telephone was tapped by the F.B.I. from 1969 to 1971.

Mr. Halperin is suing the

Federal Government for damages in that case, and in a deposition taken in that lawsuit recently Cartha D. DeLoach, formerly the third-ranking official at the bureau, referred at length to the Hoover memorandum. Mr. DeLoach's deposition is a matter of record.

The memorandum, Mr. DeLoach said, contained the names of "newspaper people friendly to the F.B.I." who were to be asked "if they could shed any light on" how the information was obtained by William Beecher, then the military correspondent of The Times.

That article, which appeared May 9, 1969, touched off a search for the sources of such

Continued on Page 25, Column 6

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

unauthorized disclosures within the Nixon Administration and led President Nixon to order wiretaps on the home telephones of four newsmen and 13 Government officials, including Mr. Halperin and Mr. Beecher.

The names of the newsmen to have been got in touch with were deleted by the bureau from the Hoover memorandum provided to Mr. Halperin's lawyers, and the Justice Department lawyer present at Mr. DeLoach's deposition said that he believed the identities of the reporters should remain a secret.

Any information they supplied about Mr. Beecher's source for the article, he said, was given "either with an express or implied understanding of confidentiality," and the reporters would be "less inclined to be helpful in the future" if their identities were disclosed.

The Times reported today that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence had learned of a network of confidential F.B.I. informants among American journalists that existed until the end of 1973, and possibly later.

Mr. DeLoach said in the deposition that he initially recommended to Mr. Hoover that information be solicited from reporters about the Beecher article but that he could not recall whether he personally had telephoned any individual on the list.

The reporters in question were selected, he said, because "they had written stories favorable to the F.B.I. in the past or the F.B.I. knew them personally, or something in that category."

U.S. Assurance Sought

John Shattuck, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union, which is helping to represent Mr. Halperin, responded to Mr. DeLoach, saying, "I want to make sure that we are in agreement that these individuals did not call in to the F.B.I., but they were, in fact, contacted by the F.B.I.; is that correct?"

"I don't know of any instance where an individual voluntarily called in to the F.B.I. without being specifically requested to take such action," Mr. DeLoach replied.

Asked precisely what sort of information the bureau had hoped to obtain through such

approaches, Mr. DeLoach said that the reporters had been "expected to furnish some information as to where Mr. Beecher got his information, or the so-called alleged classified information" that formed the basis for the article.

Mr. Beecher's report disclosed that American B-52 bombers in previous weeks raided enemy supply dumps and base camps across the Cambodian border from Vietnam.

The disclosure of those raid presented the Nixon Administration with a ticklish problem because they had been conducted with the acquiescence of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then the Cambodian ruler.

Mr. Nixon's foreign policy advisers reportedly feared that, once the bombings become publicly known, Prince Sihanouk would be forced to denounce them.