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Ruckelshaus Asks Tighter FBI Curbs

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By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

FBI's Ruckelshaus: "Provide effective oversight."

Acting FBI Director William D. Ruckelshaus said yesterday that control of the bureau "is too important to leave to the judgment of one man."

"There must be effective oversight of all FBI activities," Ruckelshaus said in a commencement speech at Ohio State University. "This essential review and check should come from both the executive and legislative branches of government. In my opinion neither the legislative nor the executive oversight is sufficient today and needs to be strengthened."

After only six weeks as temporary head of the bureau, Ruckelshaus seemed to be endorsing what many of its critics have long said: that the annual appropriations hearings on the FBI budget have merely rubber-stamped the agency's operations.

At the same time, he called upon future directors "to conceptualize how the FBI fits into our societal fabric at any given historical moment."

The director, Ruckelshaus said, "must recognize the permissible limits of investigative techniques — what is permissible in wartime or time of extreme emergency is impermissible when the

threat to our country's security is minimal."

Those words seemed to imply praise of the late J. Edgar Hoover, who was FBI director for almost half a century, for his objections to the Nixon administration's 1970 plan to expand "domestic intelligence" activities in a way that would have included burglary and other illegal acts in the name of "national security."

Internal administration documents, recently disclosed in the press, included harsh words from White House staff members about Hoover's resistance to the plans.

Ruckelshaus warned that the FBI "has enormous power and thus can be a force for evil as well as good. If this power is to be used properly in a free society, the men and women who exercise it must have judgment, integrity and scope."

The speech contrasted sharply with those given by L. Patrick Gray III, acting FBI director for 51 weeks until he resigned April 26, who vigorously defended the bureau and often questioned the motives of its critics.

Ruckelshaus also had favorable words for the bureau, calling its personnel "some of the most able, best trained and dedicated men and women who have ever served this republic."

He told the Ohio State students that the Watergate affair had contributed to the "constant erosion" of public trust in government.

Ruckelshaus will remain as head of the FBI pending Senate confirmation hearings on the man President Nixon has named as the new permanent director, police chief Clarence M. Kelley of Kansas City, Mo.