

DREW PEARSON

Vital ABM Tests Are Underground

WASHINGTON—Without any fanfare, the Atomic Energy Commission has been conducting highly significant tests deep under the deserts of Nevada to demonstrate that the anti-ballistic missile system will really work.

And to prevent any public protests over the tests, President Nixon has dispatched two of his most trusted personal emissaries, Bebe Rebozo and Herbert Klein, his communications director, to Nevada to smooth the feathers of Howard Hughes, biggest owner of Nevada real estate, who has protested vigorously against previous underground nuclear tests.



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Reason for the urgency of the current tests is that Nixon wants them finished prior to Senate debate over the anti-ballistic missile system in order to counteract the contention that he ABM is untested and won't work.

The Nevada tests consist of exploding large doses of nuclear energy in vacuum compartments underground. The vacuum compartments are supposed to simulate the lack of air density in outer space since the ABM counter missiles would be exploded at a very high altitude.

In these underground vacuum compartments are being detonated nuclear warheads of a simulated 200-megaton strength, which is four times greater than anything yet exploded. So far the biggest nuclear explosion is a 50-megaton blast by the Russians. It's planned that the United States will use up to 200 megatons

to knock out any incoming enemy missiles. ABM's tentative plan is to explode incoming missiles high up in outer space, in effect fight a nuclear duel in the skies.

So far the tests have indicated, according to some scientists close to the scene, that the ABM would be able to knock out any Chinese missiles, but not Russian missiles which are highly sophisticated.

Meanwhile, Nixon's personal envoys to the Howard Hughes empire, Rebozo and Klein, were not able to see Hughes himself, but talked to his right-hand man, Robert Mayhew, who seemed impressed with the fact that the President would send his intimate friend from Key Biscayne and his director of communications to see him.

WHAT the nation needs right now is a forthright congressional investigation of wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping, otherwise known as bugging.

At present the nation is confused over a vital question which could move us closer to a police state. Reasons for the confusion are:

—J. Edgar Hoover says that the late Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy ordered the

tapping of Dr. Martin Luther King's telephone.

—Former Attys. Gen. Ramsay Clark and Nick Katzenbach say that Hoover was the eager beaver to do the bugging.

—William Loeb, the New Hampshire publisher, has given a sworn affidavit that an assistant director of the FBI told him Bobby Kennedy operated a special division to spy on Jimmy Hoffa and tapped his wire intensively.

—The Justice Department has stated in court that the FBI engaged in wholesale electronic eavesdropping over an indefinite period of years. LBJ stopped this.

—Finally, Atty. Gen. Mitchell has let it be known that he will resume wholesale wiretapping regardless of court opinions which have ruled evidence obtained by wiretapping to be unconstitutional.

All this adds up to the fact that the public is entitled to know who is tapping whose wires and why. A Senate probe of wiretapping was held under Sen. Edward Long, a Missouri Democrat, later accused by Life magazine of having a conflict of interest with Jimmy Hoffa's lawyer. Long delved into Internal Revenue eavesdropping, but was scared to death regarding the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover. They were left uninvestigated.

The fact is that the last three presidents have been

equally afraid of tangling with Hoover. It is also a fact that, after building up the efficiency of the FBI over a long period of years, Hoover has now become a dog in the manger regarding crime prevention.

When the International Association of Chiefs of Police picked one of Hoover's assistant directors, Quinn Tamm, to be its director, Hoover turned on him and tried to get him fired.

When Rep. James Scheuer proposed a special institute on crime prevention in the Justice Department, Hoover opposed it as a rival to the FBI.

When Atty. Gen. Kennedy tried to set up a special unit in the Justice Department to fight the Mafia, as did other attorneys general, Hoover opposed it because it might compete with the FBI.

NOT ONE attorney general in the past eight years has been able to work with Hoover. Though supposed to be part of the Justice Department, he operates entirely on his own. Months pass and he does not even speak to the attorney general.

His is the only agency of government, except for Central Intelligence, whose books are not scrutinized by the general accounting office. He can spend money at will, answerable to no superior. And when he comes before congressional appropriations committees its

S STATES-ITEM

JUNE 26, 1969

members fall all over themselves asking Hoover how much money he needs.

Some congressmen, of course, are acutely aware of

the fact that Hoover's far-flung investigatory can, or already has, picked up some of their own private shenanigans — as when a well-known

"house" was raided in Washington and the FBI picked up the "madam's" little black book listing the names of 200 congressmen.

There aren't many congressmen with enough intestinal fortitude to probe wiretapping, but there are some and they should do it.