

Taps on Newsmen by F.B.I. AllegedTime Magazine Says Action Lasted About Two years

Special to The New York Times

Washington, Feb. 25 - Over more than two years, the [FBI], under orders from the White House, tapped the telephones of six or seven newsmen and a number of White House aides in an effort to determine how information was being leaked to the press, according to Time magazine.

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According to the magazine, Mr. Hoover initially balked at the White House directive to install the wiretaps, but he was ordered by John N. Mitchell, then Attorney General, to follow it.

Time goes on to say that the wiretapping operation "actually helped to keep Hoover on the job." It reports that Richard G. Kleindienst, now Attorney General but then Mr. Mitchell's deputy, "tried to force Hoover to step down and in 1971 even gave his support to a proposed Congressional investigation of the F.B.I."

Mr. Hoover, however, threatened to disclose the wiretaps to Congress, and the "scuttle-Hoover maneuver was quickly forgotten," according to the Time report.

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Mr. Kleindienst, Mr. Mitchell and [L. Patrick Gray 3d] could not be reached for comment today. Time did reach Mr. Kleindienst and Mr. Mitchell and quoted them and the White House spokesman as denying that the taps had ever existed.

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