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R1283

INTERVIEW WITH: Mabel Hoover and Ervan Kuhnke.
Office of Security, CIA

FILE:

DATE-TIME-LOCATION: Offices of the Committee on
July 25, 1975 at 10:00 AM

PRESENT: Hoover, Kuhnke, and Eric Richard (SSC)

INVENTORIED:

ON 5/14/77

BY

The main purpose of this interview was originally to speak with Hoover, who from November 1960 until June 1973 worked full time at the National Security Agency in the files maintained by the part of that organization known as C-5. However, since she was accompanied by her immediate superior, Kuhnke, who has been her supervisor since 1970, he was also asked and responded to a number of questions.

Hoover stated that her job at NSA had been to conduct name checks using the biographic files. From 1960 to 1964, Hoover was on the payroll of DDP, now DDO, of the CIA. Specifically, she was employed by Staff (now Division) D. In 1964, Hoover was transferred to the payroll of the Office of Security. However, in the 1960-1964 period she spent about half her time doing work for DDP and about half for the Office of Security. After 1964, she spent most of her time doing Office of Security work, but did occasionally handle a request from DDP. The work done for DDP was a "courtesy."

Both before and after 1964, Hoover was occasionally asked to compile biographic information on U.S. citizens. She was never given the reasons why the information was needed. Occasionally, these lists would include more than just names: they would specifically ask for information concerning involvement with particular political organizations, foreign travel, and particular individuals outside the United States.

Before 1964, Hoover's immediate superior was at first one Frances Sherman, who has since married and no longer is employed by CIA. Later in the pre-1964 period, Sherman was replaced by one Daniel J.B. Biermann, who is an attorney (apparently now working for the Veterans Administration), and who now lives in Potomac, Maryland. After 1964, and until 1970, Hoover's superior was one Adele Iulianna (spelling uncertain). In 1970 Kuhnke took over.

Hoover stated that when she first began work for CIA at NSA, three other CIA personnel were already working there. In 1964, this number was reduced to

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one (Hoover). Hoover did not know the reason why the number of personnel working at NSA had been reduced, but stated that she had been told that it was because "there were now other means of doing the same operation at CIA."

Hoover stated that she had totally free access to all the C-5 files, except for a couple of cabinets that were kept locked. She recalled these as relating to movements of East Germans, and to mainland Chinese matters. However, Hoover stated that the key to these files would usually be left lying around in an ashtray, or otherwise be available on an informal basis. She simply had to tell someone she was going to use it.

NSA exercised absolutely no supervision over Hoover's access to, or use of the information in, the biographic files. The information that she retrieved was sent back to CIA by armed courier. No one at NSA cleared its release before it left NSA. Hoover stated that no one even asked her why she needed any particular information. The materials sent out to CIA by Hoover might consist of copies, summaries, or just reference to document numbers appearing on documents in the biographic files. Hoover also prepared short biographies in her own words on the basis of the information she retrieved.

Hoover was asked whether she remembered seeing any FBI documents in the biographic files. She said that she did, and that these were generally reports on individuals. However, she did not think that they included any arrest records.

Hoover seemed to have an astonishingly good memory of the names that she had checked, once specific possibilities were suggested to her. She seemed to have no doubt whatsoever that she had conducted checks on the following names:

1. Stokley Carmichael
2. William Sloane Coffin
3. Rennie Davis
4. Jerry Rubin
5. Abe Hoffman
6. Leslie Bacon (and persons associated with her)
7. Sirhan Sirhan
8. James Earl Ray
9. Benjamin Spock
10. Roy Wilkins
11. Whitney Young

FILE:

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- 12. Ramsey Clark
- 13. George Wallace
- 14. George McGovern
- 15. Bishop James Pike

FILE:

Hoover had no memory of ever checking the names of the following individuals:

- 1. Lee Harvey Oswald
- 2. Richard Nixon
- 3. Frank Church
- 4. Howard Baker

Hoover stated that occasionally she was also asked to conduct checks on organizations. She specifically remembered conducting checks on CORE and SDS. She doesn't think she ever did a check on the Black Panther Party.

Hoover and Kuhnke were then asked whether, to their knowledge, any information taken from the biographic files at NSA had ever been supplied to any person involved with operation CHAOS at the CIA. Hoover stated that she did not know what operation CHAOS was. However, Kuhnke stated that he did know the general nature of this operation. He stated that he could not give a definite yes or no as to whether this information had been supplied to that operation, but that he "wouldn't be surprised" if it had. He stated that he did not believe that any research at NSA had specifically been initiated because of operation CHAOS, but he believed that the Counterintelligence Staff at NSA, which was responsible for operation CHAOS, had levied certain requests on the Office of Security at CIA for information as to particular individuals. In supplying this information, the Office of Security probably also supplied the information it had received from NSA.

Kuhnke stated that shortly after he had taken over in 1970, he began to feel that the biographic files at NSA were not a valuable resource and he therefore issued informal instructions to his staff that they should no longer bother using them. However, it was the responsibility of individual supervisors in his office to determine what procedures were to be used in checking particular names. He believe it was highly possible that some of the supervisors continued to ask for information from NSA.

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Hoover and Kuhnke were asked why the CIA had not decided to take NSA's US files when it took over the rest of the central information function for the intelligence community. Hoover and Kuhnke said they had participated in a meeting between various persons from CIA and Robert Tracy and another person from NSA, where the conclusion was reached that these files were simply not of much value. Since CIA itself was cramped for storage space, CIA decided not to take these files. Kuhnke stated, however, that CIA would have made room for them if they had not been so old and basically useless. Hoover said that she had been told "It was too much sand to sift for the gold." Kuhnke then stated that after these files had been offered to the Office of Security at CIA, they were offered to Division D. He said that it was his understanding that Division D had refused the files for the same reasons as the Office of Security.

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Both Hoover and Kuhnke both stated that absolutely no information from NSA's files had ever been supplied to any agency outside CIA. They said that this would have violated the third agency rule.

WATCH LIST

Hoover stated that she had been asked "a couple of times" by someone at CIA, whose name she could not remember, whether she knew anything about a watch list at NSA. In fact, someone at CIA had once given her a specific name to be put on a watch list. Hoover said that she spoke with Robert Tracy of C-5, and Tracy told her whom she should call to put the name on a watch list. However, Hoover cannot remember who the person was that she was told to call or even whether that person was in C-5 or in the operational side of NSA. Hoover said that she had never heard of project MINARET, but that she had heard about NSA watch lists while working in DDP.

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