

MEMORANDUM

To: Jeremy Gunn
From: Dennis Quinn
Date: April 17, 1995

RE: SUMMARY OF CHURCH COMMITTEE REPORT

At your request, I have reviewed portions of Volumes II, III and VI of the Church Committee Report, specifically those sections dealing with intelligence activities of the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). The following is a brief summary of my review, highlighting the portions that may be of interest to us.

I. National Security Agency

Volume III of the Church Report studies various intelligence activities and how they affect the rights of Americans. The section about the NSA starts with a brief history of the agency, and then describes how the NSA has deviated from its original directive of monitoring and intercepting foreign communications. The report focuses on several instances where the NSA intercepted private, domestic communications of Americans. The Committee's hearings disclosed three NSA interception programs: "watch lists" containing names of American citizens; "OPERATION SHAMROCK," whereby NSA received copies of millions of telegrams leaving or transiting the United States, and the monitoring of certain telephone links between the U.S. and South America at the request of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (now the DEA). Almost all of the examples discussed in the report occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s, which I assume is too late to be of real interest to us. But both SHAMROCK and the "watch lists" activity got under way in the late 1940s and early 1960s, respectively, so I think it is worth taking a brief look at them.

A. OPERATION SHAMROCK

SHAMROCK began in August 1945 when representatives of the Army Signal Corps approached representatives of the three main U.S. commercial telegraph companies seeking access to foreign governmental traffic passing over their wires. Despite advice from counsel that such peacetime intercepts would be illegal, the company representatives agreed to participate, provided they received the personal assurance from the Attorney General that the companies would be protected from lawsuits.

For the next thirty years, ITT and RCA Global provided virtually all of their international

message traffic directly to the NSA. The third company, Western Union International, only provided copies of certain foreign traffic until 1972. Operation SHAMROCK was probably the largest governmental interception program affecting Americans ever undertaken, according to the Church Report. NSA estimated that during the last two years (1974-75) of the program's existence, about 150,000 telegrams per month were reviewed by NSA analysts. SHAMROCK was terminated on May 15, 1975, by order of Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger.

I am not sure how relevant additional information on this program would be. I suppose if Oswald had sent any telegrams to the Soviet Union, Cuba or Mexico, they may have been intercepted by the NSA. The report does not indicate whether any records from SHAMROCK still exist.

B. THE WATCH LIST

For many years, the NSA maintained lists of words and phrases, including names of individuals and groups, which were used to select information of intelligence value from intercepted communication. These were known as "watch lists" by NSA and the agencies requesting information from them, including FBI, CIA, DoD and the Secret Service. According to testimony from NSA officials, the watch lists were started in the early 1960s, and originally used for two purposes: (1) monitoring travel to and from Cuba and other Communist countries; and (2) protecting the President and other high Government officials. Neither of these tasks involved a regular program for including American names on the lists.

In the early 1960s requesting agencies, usually the FBI, submitted names of United States citizens and business firms doing business with Cuba to NSA. In turn, NSA provided the FBI with intelligence on American commercial and personal communications with Cuba. A May 18, 1962, internal FBI memorandum¹ reported on a meeting with NSA officials concerning Cuba. The purpose of the meeting was to devise a way for the FBI to make better use of NSA intercepts relating to "commercial and personal communications between persons in Cuba and in the United States."² The memo described the FBI's interest in reviewing personal messages of those individuals traveling between Cuba and the U.S. and stated that the FBI would furnish the NSA a *list of persons in whom it had an investigative interest*. [Emphasis added by the Church Committee.]

The second area of concern in the early 1960s was, ironically(from our standpoint), the protection of the President. The Secret Service submitted names of the President and others under its

¹Raymond Wannell, Chief of the Nationalities Intelligence Section, Domestic Intelligence Division, to Assistant Director William Sullivan.

²*Id.*

protection, possibly as early as 1962. This was not intended to intercept the communications of the protectees, but to determine any possible threats to their well-being. After JFK was assassinated, Secret Service participation in the Watch List naturally intensified.

As mentioned previously, this early NSA/watch list activity was not directed against American citizens; no intelligence program called for the systematic inclusion of American citizens on a watch list. The routine inclusion of American names did not begin until 1967, and this mostly dealt with foreign involvement with civil rights and antiwar groups. But the Church Report indicates that the NSA did intentionally monitor the international activities of certain Americans as early as 1962. Again, as with SHAMROCK, I suppose the FBI could have included Oswald's name, as well as other theorized co-conspirators, onto an NSA watch list.

II. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Volume III of the Church Report has a section (p. 787-813) dealing with the improper surveillance of private citizens by the military. Because this section deals exclusively with events of the late 60s-early70s, I have not bothered summarizing it here.

Volume II has a short description of Army surveillance of civilian political activity during the 1960s (p. 77). The Report recounts how in the early 60s, after military troops had been deployed on several occasions to quell racial disturbances and enforce court orders on desegregation in the South, Army intelligence began collecting information on civilian political activity in all areas it believed civil disorder might occur. This growth of the Army's domestic intelligence program typified, according to the Church Report, the general tendency of information-gathering operations to continually broaden their coverage.

Pages 156-240 of Volume VI contain a rather lengthy history of military intelligence during the Second World War. This is interesting reading, particularly concerning the huge growth in the intelligence "industry" caused by the war, but there is too much information to adequately summarize here.

Pages 265-270 deal with the postwar changes in the Defense Intelligence community. It describes how these changes were sought to reduce the independence of the nation's fighting forces and unify their administration. It recounts the establishment of the Joint Intelligence Group (J-2), which was supplanted by the Defense Intelligence Agency in 1961. There is some additional history and some speculation on the organization of the NSA (nothing about any actual operations though).

Volume VI also contains a ten-page (244-253) discussion covering the history of the

National Security Council from 1947 until 1971. This section covers the various reorganizations of the NSC under different administrations and how it was influenced by certain National Security Advisors, in particular McGeorge Bundy and Henry Kissinger.