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For Whom the Spies Toil

Hemingway Ran a Spy Ring, According to WWII FBI Files

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Oct. 9 (AP)—Novelist Ernest Hemingway ran a spy ring of fishing buddies, bartenders and over-the-hill jai alai players in Cuba during World War II, according to FBI files quoted by a newspaper here today.

The ring was bankrolled by the U.S. ambassador to Cuba, but its existence—and Hemingway's political views—caused the late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover to spy on Hemingway himself, the report said.

The report appeared in a copyright story in The Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, which based its account on documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

[In Washington, an FBI spokesman said there would be no comment on the story before Tuesday.]

The Hemingway ring was organized in the early years of World War II, when Cuba was filled with Nazi sympathizers and when German U-boats prowled the waters south of the United States.

The report said Hemingway eventually had 26 anti-Nazi spies in Cuba, while the FBI had only 16 people to spy on the Nazis and on Hemingway.

The newspaper quoted confidential memos to Hoover from FBI agent R.G. Leddy, who said most of the spying seemed to have taken place at Hemingway's favorite bars, nightspots and fishing waters.

Hoover, in ordering his agents to keep an eye on Hemingway, wrote in one memo: "Hemingway

has no particular love for the FBI. His judgment is not of the best."

The FBI never found evidence that Hemingway was subversive or un-American, although its reports repeated rumors that the writer "might have" communist ties or sympathies.

"No information has been received which would definitely tie him with the Communist Party or which would indicate that he is, or has been, a Party member," Leddy wrote in a report dated April 21, 1943.

"His views are liberal," Leddy wrote later. "And he may be inclined favorably to communist political philosophies. Because of his particular nature, Hemingway would go to any length to embarrass the bureau."

Hemingway's ring was formed in September 1942 when Spruille Braden, the U.S. ambassador

to Cuba, agreed to bankroll it under the code name "Crime Shop," the newspaper said.

A month later, Leddy reported to Hoover that the ring was getting \$1,000 a month from the embassy and that most members were anti-Fascists Hemingway had met while covering the Spanish revolution.

Leddy reported the ring was based at the writer's farm outside Havana and "grew from an organization of four full-time operatives, alleged to be former members of the Spanish police force, and 12 part-time undercover agents employed as barkeepers, waiters, etc."

He said it eventually had 26 members operating "all up and down the island" and at sea aboard the Pilar, Hemingway's 40-foot sport fishing boat, which the U.S. Embassy outfitted with automatic weapons, hand grenades and gasoline.

Leddy told Hoover that Hemingway "personally had 122 gallons of gasoline charged to him from the embassy's private gasoline allotment for the month of April 1943."

Hemingway once reported a U-boat sighting from the Pilar, but Leddy claimed he could not find any other witnesses, even though Hemingway reported that the Nazi sub had surfaced near a

Hemingway later wrote of U-boat hunting adventures, and his youngest son, Gregory, told of submarine searches in his biography, "Papa."

"When I was 12, my father convinced the ambassador to Cuba that the Pilar could be converted to a sub destroyer," he wrote. "Two men were stationed in the bow with submachine guns and two in the stern with [Browning automatic rifles] and hand grenades."

Leddy eventually reported from Havana that Hemingway's band of spies had been "terminated . . . This action resulted from general dissatisfaction over reports submitted" to the embassy.

The newspaper, however, said the end of the war did not close the FBI file on Hemingway and Hoover's men reported on his activities through the years. Included in the files were a news clipping about his airplane crash while on an African safari; a detailed report on a drunken argument with an Australian journalist in Havana over the edibility of lion meat; and a 1961 memo on Hemingway being hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic, where, an agent wrote Hoover, "he is seriously ill, both physically and mentally." That July, Hemingway shot himself to death in Ketchum, Idaho. He was 61.