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Origin and Disposition
of the Huston Plan

Background

By letter dated June 20, 1969, Tom Charles Huston, Staff Assistant to the President, addressed a letter to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, stating that the President had directed that a report on foreign communist support of revolutionary protest movements in the United States be prepared for his study. According to the Huston letter, the President specifically requested that the report draw upon all the sources available to the Intelligence Community, that it be as detailed as possible, and that the word "support" should be liberally construed to include all activities by foreign communists designed to encourage or assist revolutionary protest movements in the United States. The letter stated that on the basis of earlier reports submitted to the President on a more limited aspect of the problem, it was apparent that "present" intelligence collection capabilities in the area were inadequate. Huston stated that the President wanted to know what resources were currently targeted toward monitoring foreign communist support of revolutionary youth activities in the United States, how effective they were, what gaps existed in our (U.S.) intelligence because of either inadequate resources or low priority of attention, and what steps could be taken, if the President directed, to provide the maximum possible coverage of these activities.

The request was also sent to the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency seeking contributions relating to this same problem. Pursuant to the request, the FBI and CIA submitted available information on the matter. These responses were handled unilaterally and without coordination between CIA and FBI.

On June 5, 1970, Director Hoover met with President Nixon, at which meeting the President appointed him as chairman of a special intelligence committee to

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coordinate a more effective intelligence-gathering function. 1/ He also instructed that the FBI, CIA, NSA, and DIA were to coordinate their efforts to insure that comprehensive information would be obtained for the President's use which would provide him with a worldwide picture of the efforts of new left and subversive groups in directing dissident activities in the United States. Present at this meeting were CIA Director Richard Helms; Vice Admiral Noel Gayler, NSA; General Donald V. Bennett, DIA; Mr. Tom Charles Huston, White House Staff Assistant; Assistant to the President H.R. Haldeman; Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs John D. Ehrlichman; and Robert H. Finch, Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

An initial meeting of the Interagency Committee on Intelligence (Ad Hoc) was held in Mr. Hoover's office on June 8, 1970. This meeting was attended by Mr. Helms, Vice Admiral Gayler, General Bennett, and Mr. Huston. Mr. Hoover emphasized the President's keen interest in the problem of intelligence collection and outlined the general objectives to which the Committee was to address itself. He instructed that a working subcommittee composed of representatives of all the member agencies be established and be headed by FBI Assistant Director William C. Sullivan.

The first meeting of the working subcommittee was held on June 9, 1970. At this meeting, Mr. Huston presented the subcommittee with an outline which he stated the President desired the subcommittee to follow in preparing its report. The outline addressed itself mainly to the purpose, procedures, and objectives of the subcommittee's review. The following is quoted from the outline:

1. Hearings before the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Ninety-third Congress, Second Session Pursuant to H. Res. 803, "A Resolution Authorizing and Directing the Committee on the Judiciary to Investigate Whether Sufficient Grounds Exist for the House of Representatives to Exercise Its Constitutional Power to Impeach Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States of America," Book VII, Part 1, pg. 375.

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"Purpose:

- (A) To define and assess the existing internal security threat.
- (B) To evaluate the collection procedures and techniques presently employed and to assess their effectiveness.
- (C) To identify gaps in our present collection efforts and recommend steps to close these gaps.
- (D) To review current procedures for inter-community coordination and cooperation and to recommend steps to improve these procedures.
- (E) To evaluate the timeliness of current intelligence data and to recommend procedures to increase both its timeliness and usefulness.
- (F) To assess the priorities presently attached to domestic intelligence collection efforts and to recommend new priorities where appropriate.

"Procedures:

- (A) Although the sub-committee will be officially constituted within the framework of USIB, it will in fact be an independent, ad hoc, interagency working group with a limited mandate.
- (B) Operational details will be the responsibility of the chairman. However, the scope and direction of the review will be determined by the White House member.
- (C) The sub-committee will submit its reports to the White House and not to USIB. Report will be due by July 1, 1970.
- (D) To insure that the President has all the options available for consideration, the WH member may direct detailed

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interrogatories to individual agencies in order to ascertain facts relevant to policy evaluation by the President. Information resulting from such interrogatories will, if the contributing agency requests, be treated on a confidential basis and not be considered by the sub-committee as a whole.

"Objectives:

- (A) Maximum coordination and cooperation within the intelligence community. The sub-committee may wish to consider the creation of a permanent Domestic Intelligence Operations Board, or some other appropriate mechanism to insure community-wide evaluation of intelligence data.
- (B) Higher priority by all intelligence agencies on internal security collection efforts.
- (C) Maximum use of all special investigative techniques, including increased agent and informant penetration by both the FBI and CIA.
- (D) Clarification of NSA's role in targeting against communication traffic involving U.S. revolutionary leaders and organizations.
- (E) Maximum coverage of the overseas activities of revolutionary leaders and of foreign support of U.S. revolutionary activities.
- (F) Maximum coverage of campus and student-related activities of revolutionary leaders and groups.
- (G) More detailed information about the sources and extent of financial support of revolutionary organizations.

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- (H) Clarification of the proper domestic intelligence role of the Armed Services.
- (I) Development of procedures for translating analyzed intelligence information into a format useful for policy formulation."

At a meeting of the working subcommittee held on June 23, 1970, a consensus was reached on a final draft of the report to be issued by the Interagency Committee. This report, which was captioned "Special Report Interagency Committee on Intelligence (Ad Hoc)," 1/ dated June, 1970, and numbering 43 pages, was signed and approved by the heads of each member agency at a final meeting of the Committee held in Mr. Hoover's office on June 25, 1970. 2/ The report footnoted several objections by the FBI to certain options contained in the Committee's report. 3/ These objections are enumerated in a later portion of this paper. A copy of the "Special Report" was delivered to Mr. Huston at the White House on June 26, 1970. The "Special Report" was divided into three main sections: Part One, a summarized estimate of the internal security threat; Part Two, a summary of various operational limitations on certain intelligence collection techniques with cited advantages of maintaining such restrictions as well as the advantages of relaxing them; and Part Three, an evaluation of interagency cooperation with suggested measures to improve the coordination of domestic intelligence collection.

During the first week of July, 1970, Huston sent the "Special Report" to H.R. Haldeman with a memorandum entitled "Operational Restraints on Intelligence Collection." In his memorandum, Huston recommended that the President, from among the options discussed by the "Special Report," select, in most areas discussed, the options relaxing the restraints on intelligence collection. 4/

On July 14, 1970, Haldeman sent a memorandum to Huston stating that the President had approved Huston's recommendations for relaxing restraints on

1. Ibid., pp. 384-431.
2. Ibid., pg. 383.
3. Ibid., pg. 433.
4. Ibid., pg. 437.

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intelligence collection and requested that a formal decision memorandum be prepared. 1/

In a memorandum dated July 23, 1970, addressed to the Ad Hoc Committee agencies with copies for the President and Mr. Haldeman, 2/ Mr. Huston advised that the President had carefully studied the "Special Report" and had made certain decisions with respect to issues raised therein. The President's decisions called for a relaxation of certain existing restraints on intelligence coverage, including the following: NSCID-6 was to be interpreted to permit NSA to program for coverage of the communications of US citizens, using international facilities; the Intelligence Community was directed to intensify electronic surveillance coverage of individuals and groups in the United States who posed a threat to the internal security; restrictions on legal mail coverage were to be removed and restrictions on covert mail coverage relaxed to permit its use on select targets of priority intelligence; restraints on the use of surreptitious entry were to be removed on certain high-priority targets; the coverage of violence-prone campus and student-related groups was to be increased; CIA coverage of American students traveling or living abroad was to be increased; the restrictions on the use of military undercover agents were to be retained; each member agency was to submit a detailed estimate of manpower and monetary needs required to implement the decisions; and a committee consisting of the directors of representative agencies or appropriate alternates was to be constituted effective August 1, 1970, to provide evaluation of domestic intelligence, prepare periodic domestic intelligence estimates, carry out other objectives specified in the report, and perform such other duties as the President should from time to time assign. The Director of the FBI was appointed to serve as chairman of this committee. An attachment to the memorandum from Mr. Huston captioned "Organization and Operations of the Interagency Group on Domestic Intelligence and Internal Security (IAG)" set forth specific composition, operations, and duties of this new committee. 3/

1. Ibid., pg. 445.
2. Ibid., pp. 450, 454.
3. Ibid., pg. 456.

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On receipt of the letter from Mr. Huston, the Director, FBI, addressed a letter to the Attorney General dated July 27, 1970, pointing out FBI objections to certain of the decisions reported in the Huston letter. Mr. Hoover objected to relaxation of electronic surveillance policy, the implementation of covert mail coverage, the removal of restrictions on the use of surreptitious entry of embassies to obtain cryptographic materials, the removal of controls and restrictions relating to the coverage of violence-prone campus and student-related groups, and the establishment of a permanent Interagency Committee on Domestic Intelligence. The Director stated that in the "Special Report" he had pointed out his opposition to these aspects of the report and requested of the Attorney General a prompt expression of his views concerning the matter. He noted that no action to implement the instructions contained in Mr. Huston's letter would be taken pending a reply from the Attorney General.

No further action to implement the Huston letter subsequent to the July 27, 1970, letter to the Attorney General was instituted by the Intelligence Community. There is no indication that the Attorney General ever responded to this communication.

On or about July 27, 1970, each agency that had received the memorandum of July 23, 1970, received a telephone call from the White House instructing that the memorandum be returned.

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