

Executive Registry

74-661/1

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-(b)(3)

31 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Employees

SUBJECT : CIA and Tapes

1. CBS, on the night of 29 January 1974, carried a story that CIA was providing to a Senator a tape of a conversation between General Cushman, then DDCI, and Howard Hunt. It went on to say that the Agency had possessed other tapes, including possible tapes of conversations with President Nixon, but had destroyed them.

2. The facts are the following: For many years since 1961, several Agency offices and phone lines had the capability of taping conversations. These recordings were primarily used as memory joggers and note-taking substitutes. Office conversations were handled by the Office of Security, with tapes retained there and transcripts provided to the interested office. Taping of incoming telephone conversations was handled by secretaries in the offices involved, and the tapes were normally destroyed shortly after use. Upon occasion a transcript was made, which also was normally destroyed shortly after use. There is nothing illegal about taping telephone or other conversations when one party is aware that it is being taped, although telephone company rules require that a buzzer be attached.

3. We do not know whether a Presidential conversation may have been taped, although it is possible. General Cushman did tape his conversation with Howard Hunt on 22 July 1971, in which arrangements were made for him to receive certain technical support items. A full transcript of this tape was made available some time ago to CIA oversight subcommittees, the Watergate Committee, and the Special Prosecutor. The actual tape in this instance is still in CIA's possession and on request is being made available to a Senator.

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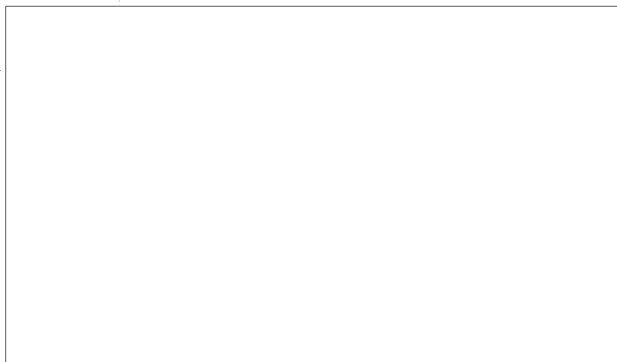
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4. These tapes were destroyed either shortly after their use or when the collection became larger than convenient (specifically in 1964 and 1971). All known remaining tapes and transcripts (except for the Cushman/Hunt conversation above) were destroyed in January 1973. (We are trying to determine the exact date and circumstances of this destruction and will report these to the Senator.) The capability of recording telephone calls or office conversations in the Office of the Director, Office of the Deputy Director, and Office of the Executive Director-Comptroller was terminated at about the same time, and we do not plan to restore this capability.

/s/

W. E. Colby
Director



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