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74-800

7 February 1974

TO: Mr. William E. Colby

SUBJECT: CIA, Tapes, and You

The facts, as known to me, are the following: For many years, perhaps 20, certainly 15, we have recorded telephone and other conversations. I have always been told it was illegal, and I believed it.

Anyone who called in was subject to having his call monitored, either mechanically or by a secretary. The results were transitory and destroyed rather promptly.

Tapes were useful in writing memoranda for the record and giving substance to a log of events. The transcripts could not be used to confront people.

My procedure was to ask the DCI if he wanted a meeting taped. He also had his own button. After the meeting, I would ask if he wanted a transcript and how soon. If he wanted no transcript, the tape was erased and re-used. As soon as we had completed the transcript, the tape was erased and re-used.

A complete log of tapings and transcripts was maintained. Transcripts were given to certain Agency officials, on loan or for retention. For example, McCone's conversations with [redacted] were given to C/CI Staff. (b)(3)

I have no knowledge of a destruction exercise in 1964. In 1965, when McCone left, [redacted] and I reviewed the holdings. We decided to destroy all remaining telephone tapes and all other transcripts (b)(3)

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2

with the exception of six which I still have. One belongs to the Kennedy Oral History Library, but I hold it per Mr. McCone's orders.

Elizabeth Dunlevy sought my advice on what to do with Dick Helms' transcripts. I suggested that they be destroyed, - if the subject matter was otherwise preserved. I believe this was done, at least the first half of it.

All senior secretaries in the world monitor their bosses' telephone calls. One can almost hear Barbara's heavy breathing. So what's the fuss?

Your notice raised some eyebrows and some questions. You have solved your own problem by denying yourself yet another luxury.

I wouldn't want you to think that your actions are going unnoticed around here. - especially by me.

  
WALTER ELDER

(b)(3)

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