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9 NOV 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : MHCHAOS

1. In the course of the survey of EUR Division, the sensitivity of the MHCHAOS program was deemed to be so great as to preclude our looking into it. We did not review MHCHAOS files, nor did we discuss specific operations at Headquarters or in the field. Consequently any comments we make must necessarily be of a general nature. Because of the sensitivity of this subject, it is handled separately from the report.

2. In the field, we detected numerous signs of uneasiness over the Agency's role. Even though there is general belief that CIA involvement is directed primarily at foreign manipulation and subversion exploitation of U.S. citizens, we also encountered general concern over what appeared to constitute a monitoring of the political views and activities of Americans not known to be or suspected of being involved in espionage. Occasionally stations were asked to report on the whereabouts and activities of prominent personalities, such as Jane Fonda and Noam Chomsky, whose comings and goings were not only in the public domain but for whom allegations of subversion seemed sufficiently nebulous to raise renewed doubts as to the nature and legitimacy of the MHCHAOS program. Some rather strong language was used in describing what was understood to be the thrust of MHCHAOS, and several officers said they wanted no part of it.

3. At two posts the possible reactions of black officers -- whose loyalty was not impugned in the slightest -- was a matter of serious concern. In one of these posts MHCHAOS traffic was destroyed immediately after reading so as to avoid any possibility of its somehow falling into the hands of a black officer.

4. Reservations in principle were sometimes supported by the more practical considerations of the likely effects of public disclosure. There was genuine concern over the probable consequences were the program to be divulged to members of Congress and/or to the American press -- it was feared the Agency would then find itself confronting a major crisis.

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5. In this connection a comment may be in order on the possible cumulative effect of MHCHAOS queries to liaison services. While we do not know the number or frequency of such requests it would seem quite possible that, over a period of time, one or more services could accumulate rather more inferential information on the program than desirable in offices not under our close control. If our own internal precautions for safeguarding MHCHAOS information are appropriately severe, we suggest that a rather large loophole in these restrictions is gradually being created by the flow of requests to liaison for MHCHAOS information.

6. On the subject of liaison, [redacted]

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[redacted] it appears that the same request for MHCHAOS assistance has too often been levied on cooperative services by both FBI and CIA representatives. Depending upon the Station relationship with the local FBI representative, this problem was sometimes avoided through local coordination. It would seem, however, that such coordination should more properly be accomplished in Washington.

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7. We also heard complaints that often the background information provided the field was less than desirable to support station requests to liaison services for assistance. Equally vexing to some stations was the tendency of Headquarters' initiators of MHCHAOS communications to assign too high a precedence to their messages, which all too often arrived in the middle of the night even though no action could be taken until the following day.

8. The Chief of CI Staff [redacted] indicated general awareness of the concerns voiced to us in the field but had not found the time to visit [redacted] posts even though he recognized the need for further explanation of the program with officers concerned. He has lectured in the COS course and has tried to talk individually with outgoing station chiefs. We heartily endorse these efforts but do not believe they go far enough. We therefore urge that [redacted] or his deputy make periodic visits to the field in order to clarify the purposes of MHCHAOS, allay the apprehensions of dedicated senior officers, reduce the flap factor, and assure more effective coordination with the field. But even such well-intentioned actions are unlikely to clear the air of basic concepts, objectives, and procedures are not refined.

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Recommendation

That the Deputy Director for Plans instruct the Chief, CI Staff, in cooperation with the chiefs of the various area divisions, to conduct a review of the experience with MHCHAOS to date, for the purpose of developing proposals for a realistic refinement of requirements, an improved standard for handling operational communications with the field, and strengthening of coordination procedures between the participating agencies.



William V. Broe
Inspector General

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