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### Statement of the Honorable Edward H. Levi Attorney General of the United States before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities. 10:00 AM. Thursday, December 11, 1975. United States Senate. Washington, D.C.

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# Department of Justice

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FOR RELEASE AT 10:00 A.M., E.D.T.  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1975

STATEMENT

OF

THE HONORABLE EDWARD H. LEVI  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES .

BEFORE

THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

10:00 A.M.  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1975  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

The Committee has asked me to talk with you today about the future of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I thought it might be helpful if I outline quite briefly some of the points I would like to make, some of the problems I think ought to be considered, and some of the steps we have taken.

The first point is that the statutory base for the operations of the Bureau cannot be said to be fully satisfactory. The basic statutory provision is 28 USC 533 which provides that the Attorney General may appoint officials "(1) to detect and prosecute crimes against the United States; (2) to assist in the protection of the President; and (3) to conduct such investigations regarding official matters under the control of the Department of Justice and the Department of State as may be directed by the Attorney General." There are other statutes, such as the Congressional Assassination, Kidnapping and Assault Act, which vest in the Bureau special responsibilities to investigate criminal violations. In addition, there are Executive orders and Presidential statements or directives which place investigatory responsibilities upon the Bureau.

A number of questions are often asked about this statutory base. It has the virtue of simplicity, but the Executive orders which deal with government employee investigations are complicated and confusing, and Presidential

memoranda or, perhaps, oral instructions from a President may be difficult to collate. I think it is important, in any case, to separate out the kinds of questions which are asked about the Bureau's authority base. Some questions are constitutional in nature, relating to the inherent power of the President; others go to the interpretation of the statutes and the relationship between the statutes and Presidential directives; others go to the failure of the statutes to define sufficiently the areas of the Bureau's jurisdiction or to spell out sufficiently--and this is partly constitutional--the means and methods which the Bureau is permitted to use in carrying out its assigned tasks.

The second point, related to the first, is a continuing discussion of the role of the Bureau in intelligence investigations or domestic security investigations. The argument is sometimes made that the Bureau's proper role, at least in purely domestic matters, should be limited to investigations of committed crimes. The basic statute for the Bureau is broader than this, as have been Executive orders and Presidential mandates to the Bureau. The basic statute is broader, since it refers to investigations regarding official matters under the control of the Department of Justice and the Department of State as may be directed by the Attorney General. A disparity is sometimes seen among the different roles of the Bureau in crime detection, in on-going domestic security matters, and in foreign intelligence or foreign counterintelligence matters. In

recent days a statement by the then Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone, who reorganized the Bureau and chose J. Edgar Hoover as its director, has been quoted as a relevant warning.

Stone warned, "There is always the possibility that a secret police may become a menace to free government and free institutions, because it carries with it the possibility of abuses of power which are not always quickly apprehended or understood .... It is important that its activities be strictly limited to the performance of those functions for which it was created and that its agents themselves be not above the law or beyond its reach .... The Bureau of Investigation is not concerned with political or other opinions of individuals. It is concerned only with their conduct and then only with such conduct as is forbidden by the laws of the United States. When a police system passes beyond these limits, it is dangerous to the proper administration of justice and to human liberty, which it should be our first concern to cherish."

I should like to suggest that Stone's warning always must be considered relevant to the proper conduct of the Bureau's duties, but it does not necessarily follow that domestic security investigations are, therefore, outside the Bureau's proper functions. The detection of crime in some areas requires preparation and at least some knowledge of what is likely to be going on. What is at issue, I think,

is the proper scope, the means and methods used, the attention paid to conduct and not views, and the closeness of the relationship of the conduct and that which is forbidden by the laws of the United States.

Third, I realize that some proposals, since I was asked about this when I last appeared before this Committee, might separate out in some fashion domestic and foreign intelligence functions from the FEI or from one another within the FBI. This is, of course, an issue to be looked at. I assume it is recognized that there may be some relationship between that intelligence which is domestic and that intelligence which is involved in foreign counterintelligence work. One may lead to the other. And there may be a relationship between foreign counter-intelligence and foreign intelligence. If the work were separated out into different agencies, I do not know if the decision about when an investigation should pass from one agency to another always could be made easily. Moreover, even so, information presumably would pass from one agency to the other. I know that one consideration has been that it might be decided that information collected by some permitted means in intelligence investigations under some circumstances should not be used in criminal prosecutions. But if there is an exchange of information, this must always be a consideration, whether there are separate agencies or not, and the basic question then is one

of use and not organization. The more active concern, I believe, is that there is a risk that conduct proper for one area may be improper for another, and that the combination can work a contamination. My view on this is that in any case we must decide what conduct is appropriate and is inappropriate for each of the areas, and we must take steps to make sure that proper conduct is lived up to. My hope is that the fact that the FBI has criminal investigative responsibilities, which must be conducted within the confines of constitutional protections strictly enforced by the courts, gives the organization an awareness of the interests of individual liberties that might be missing in an agency devoted solely to intelligence work. I know the argument can be run the other way. I believe the dangers are greater if there is separation.

Fourth, there is a question as to the proper role of the FBI in crime prevention and whether or not it should be considered authorized to take steps under some circumstances to reduce the likelihood that crimes will be committed or that serious injury to persons or property will occur. Preventive action has raised serious questions and these must be dealt with. I suppose an initial question is whether it should be allowed at all. Yet I believe under special circumstances and with proper controls most would believe this to be a proper function.

Fifth, the problem of proper controls, supervision and accountability is all-embracing. By statute the Federal Bureau of Investigation is in the Department of Justice, and also by statute the Attorney General is the head of the Department of Justice. The history is mixed, of course, and we all have a tendency to over-simplify, but it is a fair statement that there have been times in the past when the supervision by Attorneys General, granted that the Bureau must have considerable autonomy, has been sporadic, practically nonexistent, or ineffective. I hope that is not the case now. The responsibility is a heavy one. But in any event the problem of proper controls, supervision and accountability goes beyond the Director of the Bureau and the Attorney General. I have already mentioned that in my view the statutory base for the operations of the Bureau cannot be said to be fully satisfactory. I think that better controls and performance can be achieved through statutory means, executive orders, guidelines, and reporting to appropriate congressional committees.

Sixth, before I come to a resume of some of the steps which have been taken, let me say I know we all realize that in the past there have been grave abuses. I am uncomfortable with a kind of writing of history, however, which sees it only in terms of the abuses and not in terms of past and present strength. It is very difficult to be fair to the past in which many institutions of government carried a share of responsibility. But more than unfairness is involved. If we are not careful, we will turn to solutions of the moment which a better reading of history might indicate are not the best solutions. I know we must seize the moment, if I may use such a phrase in this setting. I know also that this Committee realizes that a very important agency with dedicated, highly professional, greatly disciplined government servants is involved. The importance is to the security and domestic tranquility of the United States. Stone's warning was given in an act of creation. He was proud of his creation. In spite of the abuses, there is a proper place for pride. I take it our mutual work should be to nurture that pride and the conditions which justify it.

I turn now to a review of some of the steps which have been taken or are in progress. We have tried most diligently, under safeguards to protect the privacy of individuals and with an awareness of the unfairness of instant history, to give a great deal of information to Congressional committees. Attorney General Saxbe made public and Deputy Attorney General Silberman and Director Kelley testified about the so-called COINTELPRO. When the FBI discovered evidence of several more COINTELPRO projects after I

became Attorney General, these were revealed. One of my first acts as Attorney General, my third week in office, was to testify before a Congressional committee about possible incidents of political misuse of the FBI by the White House in the past and about the nature of FBI file-keeping systems, particularly the files kept by Director Hoover in his office suite. Director Kelley has spoken publicly and before congressional committees about incidents in the past in which FBI agents engaged in break-ins to gather or photograph physical evidence in intelligence investigations. On a number of occasions, most recently in testimony before this Committee, I have described the history of the use of electronic surveillance by the FBI. We have welcomed such opportunities.

On February 26, 1975, I instructed Director Kelley to report to me any requests made of the Bureau, or practices within the Bureau, which he deems improper or which present the appearance of impropriety. On February 28, 1975, Director Kelley ordered FBI personnel to report such requests or practices to him. In July, 1975, I reaffirmed my February directive and also asked for a report of all sensitive investigative practices. The Director promptly complied.

Director Kelley has regularly provided information on conduct by Bureau agents and programs underway within the Bureau that could raise questions. These matters have been reviewed and discussed within the Department so that a consistent and appropriate policy can be achieved. This is a continuing process.

I do not assert that we are aware of everything about the Bureau. Nor do I suggest that we ought to know everything. Appropriate

communication, consultation and supervision at this level have to be selective. I make this point, which I think may sound disconcerting, not in any way to minimize the responsibility of the Bureau to keep the Department informed nor to minimize the Department's duty to find out. Rather I want to be realistic about a learning and organization problem which requires realism if it is to be understood and perfected.

With respect to possible legislation, the Department has in preparation various drafts of possible bills which may be of assistance in the area of what is now warrantless electronic surveillance. Although obtaining a judicial warrant does not automatically eradicate the possibility of abuse, it is perceived to be an important safeguard of individual privacy interests, and we are exploring, as we said we would do, various possibilities and alternatives.

Finally, a committee within the Department of Justice -- chaired by Mary Lawton, Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Counsel, and composed of representatives of my office, the Criminal and Civil Rights Divisions, the Office of Policy and Planning, and the FBI -- has been working for eight months reviewing FBI procedures in many areas and drafting guidelines to govern those procedures in the future. The Committee has produced draft guidelines covering White House inquiries, congressional and judicial staff appointment investigations, unsolicited mail, and domestic security investigations. It is currently at work on guidelines covering counterespionage investigations and will later consider the use of informants, the employee loyalty program, organized crime intelligence investigations, criminal investigations, and other aspects of FBI practice. The Committee's work has been extensive and time-consuming. It has involved not only questions of proper safeguards but also of efficiency in the proper functioning of the Bureau. It has been an effort to translate into words the complicated and important mechanisms for controlling the FBI. I hope the Committee's efforts at articulation will be of use to this Committee and others as it considers drafting legislation.

You have received copies of the latest drafts of the guidelines that have been substantially completed by the Committee. These guidelines do not yet represent Department policy. There is disagreement within the Department on some aspects of these guidelines. I have disagreed with the Committee recommendations

from time to time, and the FBI has raised substantial questions about other recommendations--particularly with respect to the treatment of unsolicited mail. Some of the proposals in the guidelines could be promulgated as departmental regulations. Congress may feel some ought to be enacted into statutory law. Other provisions would require implementation by executive order.

I would be glad to discuss these draft guidelines with you in detail in response to your questions, but a brief discussion of the guidelines on domestic security may be useful at the outset.

The guidelines begin by attempting to impose some order and definiteness to the domestic security field. To begin with, these guidelines do not deal with FBI efforts to counteract the work of foreign intelligence services operating within the United States. Standards for determining when there is foreign involvement sufficient to place a subject in the category of foreign counterintelligence investigation are now being debated within the guidelines committee. The domestic security guidelines also are not meant to cover security or background investigations of federal appointees or investigations of ordinary crimes. Under the draft guidelines, domestic security investigations are only to be authorized when there is a likelihood that the activities of individuals or groups involve or will involve the use of force or violence in violation of federal law. Domestic security investigations are to be limited to activities of individuals or groups intended to accomplish one of five purposes: overthrowing the government of the United States or of a State; interfering with the activities within the United States of foreign governments

or their representatives; influencing government policies by interfering by force or violence with government functions or interstate commerce; depriving individuals of their civil rights; and creating domestic violence or rioting when such violence or rioting would necessitate as a countermeasure the use of Federal armed forces. There is also a provision for limited investigation when there is a clear and immediate threat of domestic violence which is likely to result in a request by a state for Federal armed assistance.

Currently there is no procedure requiring the review outside the FBI of all domestic intelligence investigations conducted by the FBI, though the FBI has a long-standing policy of reporting its investigative findings to the Criminal Division. Under the draft guidelines there would be a comprehensive program of reporting to the Attorney General or his designee of all preliminary and full domestic intelligence investigations. The Attorney General would be required under the draft guidelines to put a stop to any full investigation whose justification did not meet an established standard. The standard would be that there must be specific and articulable facts giving reason to believe that the individual or group under investigation is engaged in the activities I have just listed.

Another feature of the draft guidelines is to place strict controls upon the use of any technique by the FBI which goes beyond the gathering of information. COINTELPRO was the result given the use of some such techniques. As I have said before, some of the activities in COINTELPRO were outrageous and the others were foolish. Nonetheless, there may be circum-

stances involving an immediate risk to human life or to extraordinarily important government functions that could only be countered by some sort of preventive action. The guidelines require that any such preventive action proposal be submitted to the Attorney General. He could authorize the preventive action only when there is probable cause to believe that the violence is imminent and when such measures are necessary to minimize the danger to life or property. The preventive action would in all cases have to be nonviolent. The Attorney General would be required to report to Congress periodically and no less often than once a year on the use of preventive action by the FBI.

I make no claim that during this rather difficult but interesting and--I must trust--promising period we have achieved all that might have been possible. In many ways the work has been disappointingly slow. But I do think we have made advances in nurturing and helping to improve a structure which will be supportive of the best efforts of the men and women in the Department of Justice and in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. No procedures are fail-safe against abuse. The best protection remains the quality and professionalism of the members of the Bureau and of the Department.