

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

23 June 1984

DOCUMENTS SHOW CIA AND FBI SPIED ON LENNON
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LOS ANGELES

Fearing he would disrupt the 1972 Republican convention, the CIA under the Nixon administration joined the FBI in gathering intelligence on slain ex-Beatle John Lennon, documents show.

The CIA asked the FBI for information about Lennon's ties to a group planning demonstrations at the GOP convention, said historian Jon Wiener, who obtained the previously classified documents under the Freedom of Information Act.

In one of five heavily censored documents released by the CIA, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote that the investigation of Lennon's anti-war activities "must be handled on an expedite basis and by mature, experienced agents," Wiener said Friday.

Wiener, who was researching his recently published book on Lennon, "Come Together: John Lennon in His Time," said he received 26 pounds of FBI and Immigration and Naturalization Service documents last year, which first revealed FBI involvement in the investigation.

But the FBI withheld some documents in the Lennon file for national security reasons and Wiener sued the agency in 1983 for release of materials. At a March 1984 hearing, U.S. District Judge Robert Takasugi ordered the FBI to justify in detail why it is withholding any Lennon material.

"This is the first acknowledgement by the CIA that the agency also participated in the Nixon era campaign, to neutralize Lennon's antiwar activities," said Wiener, a professor at the University of California, Irvine.

Although Wiener had not requested CIA documents under the Freedom of Information Act, the agency was required to account for deleted material in the FBI file, he said.

CIA information review officer Louis Dube filed a 10-page affidavit that was attached to the 11 pages of documents released this week, Wiener said.

He said Dube stated that the Lennon documents contained CIA cryptonyms, which are "codewords used to conceal the true nature or identity of some intelligence activity, operation, or person."

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Documents released by the FBI last year revealed the Nixon administration was told in February 1972 that Lennon was thinking of participating in demonstrations at the convention, and Attorney General John Mitchell ordered the Immigration and Naturalization Service to begin deportation proceedings against the British singer.

Lennon fought the deportation order until 1976, when he was granted permanent residency. He was shot and killed outside his Manhattan apartment in December 1980 by Mark David Chapman.

Eliot Mintz, a longtime friend of Lennon, said he saw the CIA documents and affidavit and informed the musician's wife, Yoko Ono, of the development.

'She was definitely surprised,' Mintz said in Los Angeles. 'Throughout the period of time in question ... the two were aware of surveillance to one degree or another. From the new revelations in the classified files, it was far greater than John and Yoko thought.'