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Files Show FBI Sought Deportation Of John Lennon

LOS ANGELES

The late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover hoped to arrest and deport John Lennon on drug charges in 1972 because he thought the former Beatle would disrupt the Republican National Convention, government documents show.

"In view of the subject's avowed intention to engage in disruptive activities surrounding (the convention), New York office will be responsible for closely following his activities until time of actual deportation," Hoover wrote in an April 1972 memorandum.

The bureau's voluminous file on Lennon, released under the Freedom of Information Act, was requested by University of California-Irvine history instructor Jon Wiener for a book he is writing on Lennon and the politics of the 1960s. He released portions of the file Monday.

The FBI hoped to arrest Lennon "if at all possible on narcotics charges" and initiate exportation proceedings against him, according to a file memo dated July 27, 1972, just three weeks before the Republican convention in Miami.

Lennon, who was shot to death outside his New York apartment in 1980, had been identified with anti-war activists Rennie Davis, Jerry Rubin and others as a leader of "New Left protest activities during the 1972 election year," the FBI report said.

At the time, Lennon was already fighting deportation because of a marijuana conviction in England.

While the files obtained by Wiener comprise a virtual log of Lennon's life and activities - including lyrics from his anti-war songs, concert reviews, and counter-culture publications linking him with Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern - extensive passages were blacked out and only about a third of the file was released at all.

The FBI believed it was doing the right thing in gathering the information, Jim Hall, chief of the agency's Freedom of Information office, said Monday in Washington.

"People have forgotten the riots, the burnings that transpired in those days," he said.

"Because of our concern for riots and any similar related activity in 1970 to '72, we did have a considerable number of those types of investigations going on."

Hall said most of the information withheld from Wiener was to protect the identities of FBI informants.

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Wiener and American Civil Liberties Union attorney Mark Rosenbaum, said they intend to file suit in U.S. District Court to force the federal government to release the rest of the documents.

Yoko Ono, Lennon's widow, has declined to participate in the lawsuit.

"As far as Yoko feels, she views all those experiences as happening in the past. She prefers to look to the future," said a friend, Elliot Mintz. "For her, personally, this is very painful."

The file showed that FBI offices across the nation, along with White House special assistant H.R. Haldeman, immigration authorities, the State Department and the CIA, were privy to the FBI's efforts to arrest Lennon.