

2. Attorney General [Frank Murphy] to the President, 17 June 1939.



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D.C.

June 17, 1939

The President,

The White House.

My dear Mr. President:

I desire to direct your attention to the importance of investigations involving espionage, counter-espionage and sabotage. For some time an informal committee composed of representatives of the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of War, the Department of Justice, the Post Office Department, and the Department of the Navy, has been acting as a clearing house for data or information concerning such matters. Such data or information was then transmitted to one of the investigative agencies for further action. The great majority of the investigations in this field have been conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, the G-2 Section of the War Department, and the office of Naval Intelligence of the Navy Department.

Experience has shown that handling such matters through a committee such as is described above, is neither effective nor desirable. On the other hand, the three investigative agencies last mentioned have not only gathered a tremendous reservoir of information concerning foreign agencies operating in the United States, but have also perfected methods of investigation and have developed channels for the exchange of information, which are both efficient and so mobile and elastic as to permit prompt expansion in the event of an emergency.

As of course you are aware, the Department of Justice has developed in the Federal Bureau of

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Investigation a highly skilled investigative force supported by the resources of an exceedingly efficient, well equipped, and adequately manned technical laboratory and identification division. The latter contains identifying data relating to more than ten million persons, including a very large number of individuals of foreign extraction. As a result of an exchange of data between the Departments of Justice, War and Navy, comprehensive indices have been prepared.

With a view to organizing investigative activities in this field on a more efficient and effective basis, I recommend the abandonment of the interdepartmental committee above mentioned, and a concentration of investigation of all espionage, counter-espionage, and sabotage matters in the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, the G-2 Section of the War Department, and the office of Naval Intelligence of the Navy Department.

The directors of these three agencies should in that event function as a committee for the purpose of coordinating the activities of their subordinates.

If the foregoing recommendations meet with your approval, I suggest that confidential instructions be issued by you to the heads of the Departments interested in accordance therewith.

A draft of a memorandum which you may possibly care to use for that purpose, is enclosed herewith for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Attorney General.

Enclosure
No. 2100