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## Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie on FBI Surveillance During a News Conference in Tallahassee, Florida

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE

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FOR RELEASE

REMARKS OF SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
NEWS CONFERENCE  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA  
APRIL 27, 1971

I have never tried to personalize the questions that I've raised about the FBI and the questions about general political surveillance. I think on Mr. Hoover--I think he performed a distinct national service in connection with the FBI when he took over an almost defunct agency in the early twenties and converted it into one of the most respected law enforcement agencies in the world. That was a significant achievement in the national interest.

And there's a constant effort to personalize the questions I've raised around Mr. Hoover. Now I think he should have retired long ago. In American political life, there's no such thing as an indispensable man. Mr. Hoover's not indispensable. He's been head of the FBI for 47 years. The FBI now has to operate in a different kind of a world, in a different kind of a country and its role is being challenged. It has to be reshaped and redefined and it ought to be done under new leadership. That's not a personal attack on Mr. Hoover. I disagree with some of the things he's said. I disagree with some of the ways he's approached some of the issues that confront us now. But I don't relate my recommendation that he retire to that.

Now with respect to the FBI, my questions--and they're still very real--are related to what I believe to be the fact that the FBI now is tending to reach out into the field of general political surveillance. It's difficult of course for anyone on the outside to get all the facts since after all it is a police agency and many of its files are classified and unavailable to someone like me. But we had enough information to indicate that in the case of the Earth Day rallies, the kind of surveillance that the FBI conducted was more in the nature of general political surveillance than it was surveillance in connection with its principal responsibilities--which are the threat of crime, the threat of violence, the threats to national security. The one report that I put in the Congressional Record--which was unclassified so I felt I could--was not the kind of a report that one would expect in connection with those responsibilities.

It was a general description of surveillance that amounted, in my judgment, to general political surveillance. And it wasn't just two or three. My source was in the intelligence community--not the FBI but in the intelligence community--and there are many, many more reports covering the Earth Day activities, which are certainly not subversive activities. These are activities conducted by people concerned about environmental problems. They had every right to participate and get involved without having their names filed in FBI dossiers which are distributed to intelligence and police agencies of all sorts with the implications that are drawn from that fact.

And that's the question I raised and I think that unless we are alert to that sort of development that an honored police agency like the FBI could become, through overzealousness and lack of alertness on our part, the kind of agency that we associate with different kinds of societies. We don't want it to become that. We want it to remain what it has been and not to become something different.