



New York State Archives

**New York State Bureau of Criminal Investigation Special
Services State Police Non-Criminal Investigation Case Files
A0795**

New York State Archives
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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series consists of investigation files of non-criminal activity generated by the New York State Police Special Services Unit (known before 1970 as the Criminal and Subversives Section) as it examined organizations and individuals with supposed subversive or radical connections. The files contain police investigation reports, related correspondence and intra-agency communications, index cards summarizing known affiliations or previous investigations of individuals or groups, and background material pertinent to each case.
Creator:	New York (State). Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Special Services
Title:	State Police non-criminal investigation case files
Quantity:	89 cubic feet
Inclusive Date:	1940-1975
Series:	A0795

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Arrangement

Arranged in several sequences by case number (Boxes 1-47), alphabetically by name of individual, organization, or topic investigated (Boxes 48-60, 85-88, 89-106), or binder number (Boxes 61-64).

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Administrative History

The Special Services Unit within the Bureau of Criminal Investigation of the New York State Police (known before 1970 as the Criminal and Subversives Section) was formed during the Second World War, ca. 1940, to investigate possible threats to public order and safety throughout New York State. Special Services investigators were stationed in each of the ten regional subdivisions of the State Police, or "Troops," and reported to their Troop Commander

or Special Services Lieutenant on any threats posed by riots, strikes, demonstrations, or other subversive activities in their respective jurisdictions. While Special Services personnel focused on maintaining public order, officers conducted numerous investigations into private individuals and organizations that, in their opinion, seemed to demonstrate subversive or violent tendencies, even though officers lacked any concrete evidence of wrongdoing. During the course of its existence, the Special Services Unit investigated politicians, educators, members of the media, and private citizens, as well as organizations associated with Communism, Black Nationalism, Civil Rights, Anti-War/Peace rhetoric, and other social and political issues of the era.

In July 1975, the Special Services Unit was dissolved as a result of a lack of personnel and, according to the State Police, "a decline in riotous activities." Because of the controversy surrounding this unit and its information gathering, the New York State Assembly created a special task force to study the State Police non-criminal investigation files, as well as "recommend remedial legislation to properly limit such [information] collection in the future" (Assembly Special Task Force on State Police Non-Criminal Files report, September 1977, pp. i, 8). The Special Task Force, chaired by Assemblyman Mark Alan Siegel, concluded that while the State Police may have "exaggerated the need for information" and "overzealously interpreted . . . their legal mandate," the agency was not guilty of any illegal behavior (September 1977 report, pp. 45, 47).

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Scope and Content Note

This series consists of investigation files of non-criminal activity generated by the New York State Police Special Services Unit (known before 1970 as the Criminal and Subversives Section) as it examined organizations and individuals with supposed subversive or radical connections. The files document the entire lifespan of the unit, ca. 1940-1975, and contain police investigation reports, related correspondence and intra-agency communications, index cards summarizing known affiliations or previous investigations of individuals or groups, and background material such as periodical clippings, brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and photographs pertinent to each case. Often, case numbers are written on individual documents in the upper margin.

A large portion of investigation files are focused on political and social radicalism. In the 1940s-1950s, the records document investigations into left-wing/Communist organizations, including the Communist Party, Youth Workers Liberation League (YWLL), American Labor Party, and International Workers Order (I.W.O.), and, to a limited extent, right-wing groups as well. In addition, the files include probes into colleges and universities to identify individuals affiliated with the Communist Party during this period, most notably at Cornell University and Syracuse University. There are also multiple files of the Joint Legislative Committee on Charitable and Philanthropic Agencies and Organizations, which studied whether certain

organizations-notably the Civil Rights Congress-were applying charitable contributions to support Communist activities.

Records from the 1960s-1970s cover investigations of individuals and organizations associated with the "New Left." The files contain detailed information on peace councils and other pacifist organizations across New York State; on individuals attending anti-war demonstrations during the Vietnam War; on social activist and community action groups; and on Black Nationalist organizations like the Black Panthers, Black Liberation Army, Republic of Africa, and Nation of Islam. This portion of the series also contains files on many prominent state and national politicians, intellectuals, and public figures of the time, including Rockwell Kent, Angela Davis, Richard Nixon, Jonathan Bingham, Eugene McCarthy, and George Wallace.

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Related Information

Related Material

L0260Series L0260, Investigation files of the Rapp-Coudert Committee, contains related records

A0181Series A0181, Report of the Joint Legislative Committee on Charitable and Philanthropic Agencies and Organizations, contains related records

B0506Series B0506, Security risk program files, contains related records created by the Civil Service Commission.

Related Publications

State Police Surveillance: Report of the New York State Assembly Special Task Force on State Police Non-Criminal Files, September 1977, is available from the New York State Library.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Folder list is available at the repository.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

Restricted: Boxes 3-5, 19-24, and 43-47 contain Department of Correction and FBI "rap sheets" that are exempt from disclosure under state and federal law.

Restricted: Some files contain information that is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Law, including but not limited to the exemptions to protect personal privacy and to protect the identity of confidential informants.

Alternate Formats Available

Items Online

Selected audio recordings from this series have been digitized and are available in State Archives Digital Collections.

[State Police Non-criminal investigation case files, 1940-1975](#)

Administrative Information

Processing Information

Investigation files of the Rapp-Coudert Committee were originally part of this series, but were removed and accessioned as a separate series (L0260) in March 2009.

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Access Terms

- Teachers--Political activity
- Politicians
- Radicalism
- Education and state--New York (State)
- Anti-communist movements--New York (State)

- Black nationalism
- New York (State)
- Police--New York (State)
- Subversive activities
- Photographs
- Communism
- Case files
- Police administration--New York (State)
- New Left--United States
- Investigating
- Universities and colleges--New York (State)
- New York (State). Division of State Police
- New York (State). Legislature. Joint Legislative Committee on Charitable and Philanthropic Agencies and Organizations
- New York (State). Bureau of Criminal Investigation
- New York (State). Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Criminal and Subversives Section