

● Box 176 (1942)

PSF

Quinlan, Walter

1 item

Box 176

Subject File

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

September 8, 1942

(SC)A8-5/QQ
(042700A/GRC)

My dear Mr. President:

Recently you sent me a little note from the Chairman of the S.E.C. complaining that Mr. Walter Quinlan, President of the Robbins Myers Company of Springfield, Ohio, had been indulging in some indiscreet discussion of the Norden bomb sight with a visiting Englishman.

I called in the F.B.I. and suggested that the matter be given a little individual treatment and I have just received the attached letter from Edgar Hoover.

Yours sincerely,



The President

The White House

Enclosure

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

DECLASSIFIED

DOD DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/58)

Date- 3-10-59

Signature- *Carl L. Spicer*

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
DIRECTOR



**Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.**

SEP 3 1942

PERSONAL AND [REDACTED]
SPECIAL MESSENGER

The Honorable
The Secretary of the Navy
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

With reference to your conversation with Assistant Director W. A. Tamm of this Bureau on August 28, 1942, Mr. Walter Quinlan, President of the Robbins Myers Company of Springfield, Ohio, was interviewed with reference to his reported promiscuous discussions of the Norden bomb sight.

Mr. Quinlan advised that his company manufactures about two-thirds of the parts employed in the construction of the Norden bomb sight. His son, presently in the Army, is married to Norden's daughter.

Mr. Quinlan stated that he knows Michael Dewar, having first met him while Dewar was a member of the British Purchasing Commission, and altogether he has had eight or nine contacts with Dewar, the last being in June of 1941 at the Carlton Hotel in Washington, D. C.

On this last occasion Mr. and Mrs. Quinlan and Dewar were in the cocktail lounge of the Carlton Hotel in Washington. Mr. Quinlan advised that a naval officer was sitting near them and was talking rather loudly. He made the statement, which Quinlan and Dewar overheard, that "the British don't want the Sperry sight". The conversation of Quinlan and Dewar, following this remark by the naval officer, then devolved around loose talk on the part of the naval officer and some mention was made of the bomb sights.

The Honorable
The Secretary of the Navy

- 2 -

although Mr. Quinlan stated that there was no discussion or statement on his part regarding the superiority of the Norden over the Sperry sight or any suggestion that the British were being furnished an inferior sight.

Mr. Quinlan denied discussing the Norden bomb sight with Dewar or any other unauthorized person and particularly stated that he never discussed the respective qualities of the Norden and Sperry bomb sights with Dewar or anyone else. He appeared to be sincere in his responses to the inquiries regarding the facts furnished by you and in an effort to furnish some information as to the basis upon which the allegations were made, recalled the incident at the Carlton Hotel. Mr. Quinlan called attention to the fact that, as far as he can recall, Dewar returned to England in October of 1941.

Mr. Quinlan was cautioned at considerable length against making any statements in public or to unauthorized persons in private regarding the Norden bomb sight, with emphasis on the serious effect that loose talk can have on our war effort.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

file
copy

August 29, 1942

[REDACTED]

My dear Mr. Purcell:

This will acknowledge your letter of August 22 concerning the indiscretion of Mr. Walter Quinlan, of Springfield, Ohio, President of Robbins and Myers, Inc. This matter is being thoroughly investigated by the Navy.

Prior to the result of that investigation, however, it can be said that Mr. Quinlan's company does not make the Norden bombsight. The company is engaged in the manufacture of parts to be used in conjunction with the manufacture of the sight and information concerning these parts is not closely held, and it is the opinion in the Navy Department that the disclosure of Mr. Quinlan about what he knows about the sight does not involve any jeopardy to the sight itself.

Quinlan could not have told the British anything they did not know about the sight because for a period of several months, the British have been provided with the sight by the Navy Department. Furthermore, the destruction within Japanese held territory of a number of American planes which were equipped with the sight leads to the belief that the Japanese also have come into military possession of this article. It is the belief, however, of the Ordnance Department that even if the Japanese have come into possession of one or more of the Norden sights, the manufacturing process is so exacting and involves such intricate plans that it would be many months, if not several years, before they could reproduce it.

Prompt steps have been taken to warn Mr. Quinlan of the nature of his offense against American security in indulging in indiscreet talk.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Ganson Purcell, Chairman
Securities and Exchange Commission
Philadelphia, Pa.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

46301

August 29, 1942

(SC)A8-5/QQ
(039300A/GRC)



My dear Mr. President:

This is in reply to your memorandum of August 25 concerning the indiscreet conduct of Mr. Walter Quinlan, of Springfield, Ohio. I am having the matter carefully investigated as you suggested.

I am attaching a suggested reply to be signed by you to Mr. Ganson Purcell on the matter.

Sincerely yours,

Frank Knox

The President

The White House

Enclosure

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DECLASSIFIED
DOD LHM. 5200.9 (9/27/58)

Date- 3-10-59

Signature- *Carl S. Spicer*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON


August 25, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Please read enclosed from
Ganson Purcell, Chairman of the
S. E. C. This is pretty bad.
Don't let this news leak out
but I think we should do some-
thing.

Please prepare reply for
my signature.

F. D. R.

(Enclosure) Memo of Aug. 22 to the
Pres. re investigation which
the S.E.C. has been making into Empire
Ordnance Corp. evidence indicates that
principal officer of a corp. mfg. the
Norden bombsight has failed to preserve
the secrecy with which the Govt. has
surrounded the bombsight.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

~~WASHINGTON~~
PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

August 22, 1942

THE WHITE HOUSE
AUG 24 8 56 AM '42
RECEIVED

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

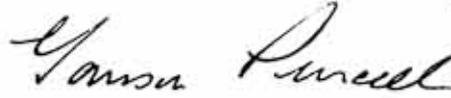
During the course of the investigation which the Commission has been making into Empire Ordnance Corporation and persons affiliated with it, our attention has been directed to evidence indicating that the principal officer of a corporation manufacturing the Norden bombsight for the Government has failed to preserve the secrecy with which the Government has surrounded that bombsight. While this matter is not related to our investigation, it seemed to me that the interest of the national defense required that the Commander-in-Chief be informed as to such carelessness in connection with a vital military secret.

The individual is Walter Quinlan, President of Robbins and Myers, Inc., of Springfield, Ohio. On November 11, 1941, Quinlan told Michael Dewar, of the British Tank Mission, "very confidentially - after a few drinks" that "his firm were making the Norden Bomb Sight and that the Sight that the U. S. had given

to Great Britain was the Sperry and not the Norden". Again, on June 6, 1942, Quinlan told Dewar at the Washington Hotel that "he understood that the bombers we were now getting had the Norden bomb-sight, which he makes, and which he will insist, is enormously accurate".

Since no investigation has been made of this matter by the Commission, it is not possible to state whether Quinlan has been indiscreet in discussing this matter with persons other than Dewar.

Respectfully submitted,



Ganson Purcell
Chairman