

FBI Ready to Abandon Search

Bishop Leaves No Trail in Smokies

By Donnel Nunes
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GATLINBURG, Tenn., March 20 — The search for Bradford Bishop Jr. in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been all but given up by FBI agents here.

"Completely negative" is how Harold Swanson, special agent-in-charge of the Knoxville office of the FBI, characterized today the two days of searching for Bishop in the rocky, mountainous terrain.

Bishop, 39, is charged with the murders of his wife, mother and three sons. The victims were beaten to death in their home in Bethesda, Md., on March 1. Their bodies were recovered in makeshift grave in North Carolina the next day.

Swanson said the FBI "probably will not search here anymore, barring additional information." About 30 FBI agents, with two bloodhounds, hike across the park trails again today near the campground where Bishop's station wagon was found abandoned on Thursday.

"We are not ruling out the possibility that he might still be in there," Swanson said, "but what we found so

far certainly diminishes the chances."

The entire half-million-acre national park was closed to campers and hikers briefly today, while the search on foot, and from a helicopter, was carried out.

But in midafternoon, with no new clues and footing made treacherous by heavy rain and high winds, the search was called off.

The FBI located a man who earlier was reported hiking a trail in street clothes last weekend. They learned that he is a resident of nearby North Carolina who frequently walked the trails.

The car, which police believe was used to transport the bodies from the Washington area to North Carolina, was parked in the Elk-mont campgrounds here for two weeks before residents reported it to park rangers.

A search of the vehicle revealed a blood-stained blanket, an ax, shotgun and a dose of medicine prescribed for Bishop by a psychiatrist.

With the hunt for Bishop here turning up nothing, authorities were prepared to resume their nationwide search for the missing foreign service officer.

A man using State Depart-

ment credentials reportedly attempted to buy or swap a loaded .38-caliber handgun for a more powerful weapon in a sporting goods store near Asheville, N. C., a week ago.

The FBI said yesterday that that report, coupled with the failure of the search, added to speculation that Bishop no longer is in the area where the station wagon was abandoned.

The only confirmed loca-

tion of Bishop between the time he left his office at the State Department on March 1 and the discovery of the car has been traced to March 2, five hours after the bodies were discovered.

A handwriting analysis showed that Bishop used his BankAmericard that day to buy \$15.50 worth of merchandise in a sporting goods store in Jacksonville, N. C., about 100 miles south of the burial location.