

Sting's Role in Presser Case Probed

FBI and Federal Strike Force May Have Worked at Cross-Purposes

By Robert L. Jackson
and Ronald J. Ostrow

Los Angeles Times

Senate investigators are studying government files showing that the FBI conducted a "sting" operation in 1982 that resulted in tarnishing a Cleveland crime figure who was a potential key witness against the bureau's secret informant, Teamsters union President Jackie Presser.

The episode involved Jack Nardi, who seven months earlier had told a federal grand jury that Presser had made him a "ghost employe" of Presser's hometown Cleveland local.

It is being investigated as a possible example of injurious rivalry and poor communication between the FBI and a federal strike force that was investigating Presser.

In planning the sting against Nardi, 43, FBI officials did not consult the strike force, although they did notify strike-force attorneys a few hours before the undercover operation was launched.

In that operation, Nardi was caught in an extortion attempt in which he asked for \$20,000 in exchange for altering his damaging testimony against Presser. He later pleaded guilty.

Sources familiar with the case rate the FBI's pursuit of Nardi, son of a murdered Cleveland Teamster

with alleged ties to organized crime, as unquestionably good police work.

But the Senate permanent investigations subcommittee is looking at the Nardi case as part of its effort learn why the Justice Department spent three years investigating Presser for alleged payroll padding before dropping the Presser case in July.

Subcommittee officials declined comment on the matter, but confidential Labor Department records being studied by the panel show that members of the department's inspector general's office, which conducts racketeering probes, were angry about the FBI's handling of Nardi.

Strike-force prosecutors were concerned that the extortion conviction had badly damaged Nardi's credibility before a trial jury.

Justice Department sources have said the Presser case was abandoned after his attorney persuaded officials that Presser had been permitted by FBI agents to hire "ghost employes," who did no work, in order to maintain his connections with organized-crime figures.

Neither the strike force nor the Labor Department ever knew of the FBI's involvement in Presser's alleged wrongdoing, those sources said.

Presser's attorney, John R. Cli-

maco, has said in letters made public in a Cleveland court case that Nardi, through an intermediary, suggested to a Presser aide in November 1982 that he might change his earlier grand jury testimony against Presser in return for a \$20,000 payment.

Subsequently, Climaco said, he took the aide, John Joyce, to tell that to Joseph Griffin, special agent in charge of the Cleveland FBI office.

Some strike-force members, hearing about the visit later, said that they found it difficult to believe and that Griffin was not normally available to a complaining citizen such as Joyce.

But according to those sources, Griffin conducted the interview himself and acted immediately on Joyce's information, dispatching five undercover FBI agents to Flor-