

Controversial FBI Official Will Bow Out

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Thomas E. Bishop, assistant director of the FBI in charge of its crime research division and the bureau's chief public spokesman for the past five years, announced yesterday that he will retire in February.

Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III said that he would not replace Bishop and would instead bring responsibility for the FBI's contacts with Congress and the press into his own office.

Gray also launched "a management survey" which could lead to total abolition of the crime research division and reassignment to others of its remaining functions.

The FBI released an exchange of polite letters between Gray, who took over for the late J. Edgar Hoover last May, and Bishop, who has been in the FBI for over 31 years.

Bishop wrote that "many considerations, not the least of which are my responsibilities to my family," led him to request retirement.

Gray wrote back that "you have every reason to be proud of the contribution you have made to the magnificent record of FBI accomplishments."

In fact, however, Gray and Bishop have been feuding almost from the moment the acting director was named by President Nixon. Had Bishop not retired, FBI sources said, Gray would have forced him out in the near future.

One issue of contention between them was Gray's new "open window" policy, under which he has vowed to provide

many more details about the bureau's operations to the press and the public.

Bishop, who came up through the FBI ranks under Hoover, voiced objections inside the bureau to this policy and to the number of public speeches Gray has given, the bureau sources said.

His attitude as FBI spokesman was to release the minimum amount of information possible. He was said to have been ordered by Hoover at one time not to communicate at all with representatives of certain news media, including The Washington Post and The New York Times.

Recently, Bishop was blamed for two incidents that brought considerable criticism of the FBI.

In one, it was revealed that the bureau had for 21 years been collecting information about members of Congress and congressional candidates, allegedly as part of its "congressional relations program."

FBI sources said that Bishop—under whose jurisdiction it fell—had never told Gray of this information-collecting, despite the acting director's requests for full briefings when he took over last spring. When Gray learned of it, he was infuriated and suspended the program.

In another matter of controversy, Bishop was held responsible for forwarding to FBI field offices in 14 states a White House request for election-year political advice on issues involving criminal justice.

That request went out in a teletype over Gray's name but

without his knowledge.

During his long FBI career, Bishop served as special agent in charge of FBI offices in San Antonio, San Diego, San Juan and Richmond.

Gray announced the change in bureau junction from his hospital room in New London, Conn., where he is recuperating from surgery to remove an intestinal obstruction.