

# FBI Fires Aide For Allegedly Lying in Probe

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The former head of the FBI's New York office was fired yesterday by Attorney General Griffin B. Bell for allegedly lying to a federal grand jury investigating illegal FBI break-ins.

J. Wallace LaPrade, one of the bureau's top ranking officials, announced his dismissal at a New York press conference and vowed to fight it through a lengthy appeals process.

He said he was a "scapegoat" who was fired because he refused to discuss top-secret foreign intelligence information with Justice Department prosecutors seeking evidence of burglaries the FBI conducted in the early 1970s in a search for radical fugitives from the Weather Underground.

A Justice Department spokesman confirmed the firing, but would not characterize the charges.

"If I had discussed it (the classified information, I would have been fired for revealing it," LaPrade said.

LaPrade was removed as head of

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the New York office in April, when Bell announced the indictment of former acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III and two other top officials for authorizing break-ins.

The Justice Department said then that disciplinary proceedings would begin, but did not detail the charges. The Washington Post reported that Bell had been furious at LaPrade's refusal to cooperate with investigators.

The attorney general refused, however, to let his prosecutors seek a perjury indictment against the veteran FBI official. Instead, Bell intervened personally and asked LaPrade to tell the truth so he wouldn't have to prosecute an FBI agent for lying.

LaPrade's later testimony was helpful in making the cases against Gray, W. Mark Felt, former No. 2 man at the FBI, and Edward S. Miller, former intelligence chief, according to sources.

LaPrade is considered likely to be a witness at the trial of the three other officials.

Bell's refusal to seek indictment of LaPrade last year was cited by members of the original team of Justice Department prosecutors as one of the reasons they finally resigned from the investigation.

That decision by the attorney general had a "devastating" impact on the investigation, William L. Gardner, former head of the task force, told a congressional hearing.

In moving formally against LaPrade yesterday, Bell has, in effect, done administratively what he declined to do with a criminal indictment.

Bell is known to have considered LaPrade's conduct during the investigation worse than that of FBI officials who approved illegal break-ins. But he also felt, sources said, that it would take the FBI longer to recover from a perjury indictment of a high official than from the civil rights conspiracy charges finally filed.

LaPrade's public reaction to the proposed discipline in April was so vehement that Bell said he was "astounded" and was "having a lot of

second thoughts" about his decision not to approve the perjury charge.

LaPrade's reaction yesterday also was outspoken. He said in a phone interview from his New York office that "they decided they had to have a scalp and they decided it was mine."

He said he didn't feel he'd done anything wrong and alluded to parallels between his case and that of former central intelligence director Richard Helms, who explained lying to a congressional committee because he had a conflicting oath to protect national secrets.

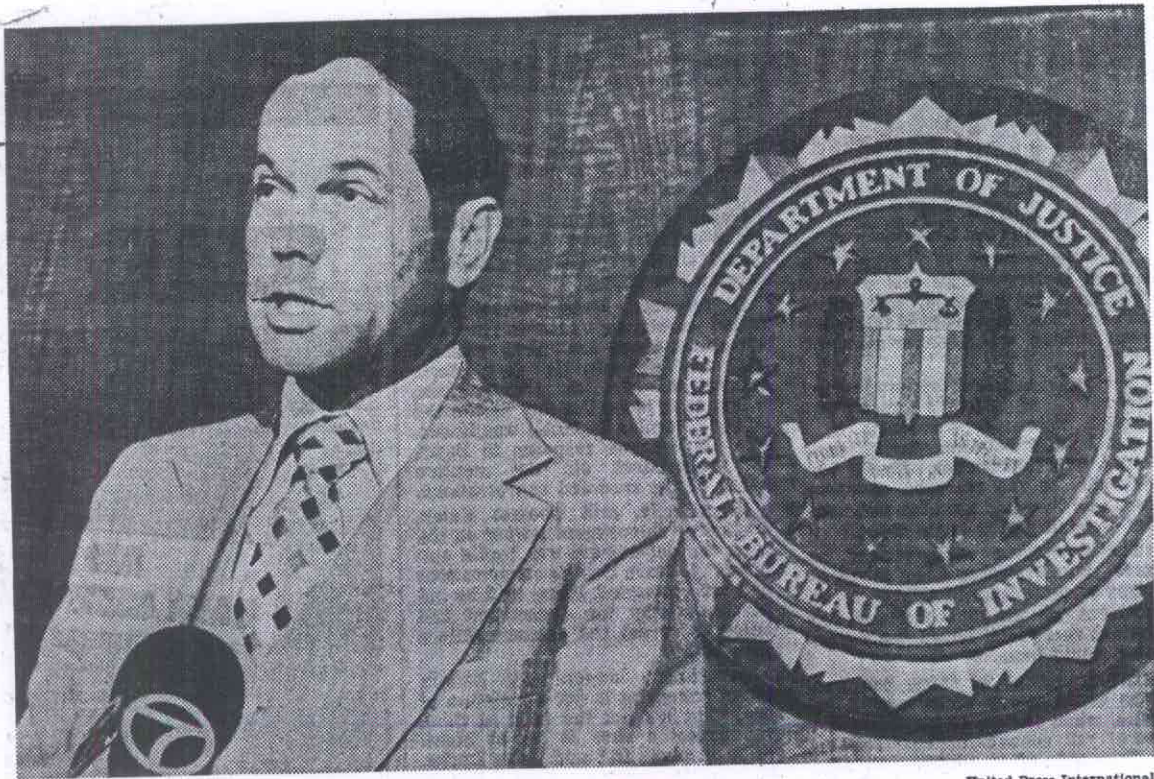
"There were security restrictions on what I could say," LaPrade said on his

dealings with the prosecutors in the grand jury. "I think it's unfair to punish someone for guarding closely held intelligence."

Prosecutors have dismissed claims that foreign intelligence connections with the Weather Underground are a valid issue in the FBI break-in cases.

LaPrade's appeal will be heard by the Civil Service Commission only because he is a veteran. FBI agents usually are not covered by civil service laws.

The firing—effective today—will not affect pension rights for the 27-year FBI official. That amounts to about \$34,000 a year, LaPrade said yesterday.



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Ousted official LaPrade: "They decided they had to have a scalp and they decided it was mine."