

FBI assistant claims Bell is using him for scapegoat

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NEW YORK (AP) — J. Wallace LaPrade, ousted head of the largest FBI field office, was fired from the agency Thursday by Attorney General Griffin Bell for withholding testimony from a grand jury investigating a terrorist organization.

LaPrade, an assistant FBI director who headed the 800-agent New York office for three years, said the agency was using him as a scapegoat.

"They had to get somebody," LaPrade said of the Justice Department's action. "They got me."

In Washington, the FBI confirmed that LaPrade was dismissed on orders of Bell, but the agency declined further comment.

LaPrade called a news conference to announce that he received the termination notice at 7:30 a.m. from Bell. He said he would appeal the action, which is effective at 5 p.m. Friday, to the Civil Service Commission.

LaPrade, 51, accused Bell of having forbidden him to reveal information that would have cleared him of the administrative charges leading to his ouster.

"What is the top-secret foreign intelligence information that Griffin Bell wishes to suppress at all cost?" he asked rhetorically.

"I am being fired for refusal to discuss this information with the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. If I had discussed it, I would have been fired for revealing it."

The 27-year veteran of the FBI said the necessity to "get somebody" stem-

med from a "post-Watergate syndrome." This meant that if there was something wrong in Washington, there must be something wrong in the FBI, LaPrade went on.

Former FBI Acting Director L. Patrick Gray III, W. Mark Felt, the retired No. 2 man, and Edward S. Miller, onetime chief of counter-intelligence, await trial on charges stemming from the same probe.

They were accused of violating the civil rights of the suspected members of the Weatherman, a radical underground group active in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and their acquaintances by sanctioning the surreptitious entry of their homes.

"I do not believe that any agent at any level working to capture the death-dealing Weathermen, ever intentionally violated any law," he said.

In another development Thursday within the Justice Department, Bell himself was held in contempt of court for refusing to obey a federal judge's order to disclose the names of 18 agency informers.

LaPrade, transferred to Washington nearly three months ago after declining Bell's request to resign, on Thursday urged public hearings on his private talks with the staff of the Senate intelligence committee. This would "help bring an end to this coverup," he said.

LaPrade said his termination does not affect his pension, which he said amounted to 72 percent of his current \$47,500 annual salary.