

Burglaries by FBI Listed in Hundreds

7/16/75

By Ronald Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writer

The FBI until 1966 conducted dozens and sometimes more than 100 burglaries each year, according to a source who said he approved many of the break-ins.

The source said most of the burglaries were directed against the Communist Party, extremist groups, embassies and other targets that would come under the category of "security cases." But he said a number of others were conducted in ordinary criminal cases such as bank robberies, kidnappings and hijackings.

The source said each burglary was approved by several different layers of FBI officials, including former Director J. Edgar Hoover. The purpose, the source said, was to get information that could not be obtained with search warrants.

The source added, "These were tough cases. They [the break-ins] would lead to infor-

mation that would lead to prosecutions."

An FBI spokesman declined to comment.

At a press conference Monday, FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley confirmed that FBI agents conducted "surreptitious entries," or burglaries, in this country "in securing information relative to the security of the nation."

Kelley said the break-ins were stopped in 1966 "with the exception of a small amount of actions which were conducted in connection with foreign intelligence investigations which we felt had grave impact on the security of the nation."

Kelley declined to say how many burglaries were conducted. He said the practice was stopped by Hoover, who felt that in the context of the times it was not a "viable procedure."

See FBI, A9, Col. 5

Hundreds of Break-Ins Attributed to the FBI

FBI, From A1

However, the FBI source, speaking from what he said was personal knowledge, said the break-ins were stopped by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

He said Hoover had decided to get authorization from the Attorney General before conducting questionable activities.

"We sent through a recommendation in writing to do a job on a consulate. Hoover said we want to get Clark's approval. He was getting concerned about his image," the source said.

Although the request initially was couched in terms of a "surreptitious entry," Hoover crossed out the euphemism and called it a "burglary," the source said.

Clark said from New York that his only knowledge of break-ins was a request made to him by Hoover in 1966 for authorization to burglarize the New York consulate office of a North African nation.

"I refused, saying I didn't see how an Attorney General

sworn to execute the laws could authorize their violation," Clark said. The request was brought back several times, Clark said, but he never approved it.

The source said requests to conduct break-ins would generally originate with the special agent in charge of a field office.

The requests required the approval of the supervising agent in charge of the case in Washington, assistant directors under Hoover, and Hoover, the source said.

The source said Hoover generally approved the requests orally, and he said the FBI would not have documents on many of the burglaries.

Agents who carried out the burglaries were picked for their experience in the FBI. "We didn't pick lunkheads. We picked seasoned, experienced veterans," he said.

If anything went wrong, the source said, "His (the agent's) head was on the chopping block." He added, "You'd pick a man who had nerves of steel."