

FBI Is Probing 574 Corruption Cases Involving Public Officials, It Says

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The FBI is pursuing 574 corruption investigations involving present and former congressmen, governors, mayors and other officials, a spokesman said yesterday.

The FBI spokesman, Tom Coll, said some of the inquiries involve a number of targets, and the count of individual officials under investigation could run far higher. Coll would not reveal the exact number or identify any individuals involved.

"There are some current members of Congress who are subjects of investigations," Coll said in a telephone interview. "There are some fairly well-known former members of Congress.

"There are sitting governors and former governors. There are individuals serving as mayors of cities throughout the country. The investigations go all the way down the line."

As to present and former members of Congress, Coll said, "A very, very small amount has anything to do with the Korean bribery scandal." Again, he declined to give a specific number.

Coll said most of the investigations were started in the past three years and are based on a 1970 amendment to the federal "racketeer influence and corrupt organizations" statute and a "corruption of public officials" statute.

"We have approximately 200 investigations going under the racketeer influence and corrupt organizations statute," Coll said. "What we have done is develop an expertise in using that particular statute around the country. Roughly 180 investigations are based on 'Corruption of political officials.'"

Coll gave this summary of convictions obtained in federal criminal courts during the past three years:

- "We have convicted a former governor of Oklahoma; a former governor of Michigan; five members of the Macon, Ga., police department; two Pennsylvania state senators; 20 former magistrates of Allegheny County, Pa.

- "The president of the East St. Louis, Mo., school board and five board members; the sheriff of Whitley

County, Ky., the former speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives.

- "The majority and minority leaders of the Massachusetts Senate; a former Union City, N.J., police commissioner; four Maryland officials, including a member of the House of Delegates.

- A state's attorney and the head of the Baltimore General Services Bureau; also the entire St. Charles Parish, La., police jury (The basis parish, or county, governmental body); the mayor of Cahokia, Ill.

- "A Virginia regional Small Business Administration director, and an inspector and sergeant of the San Francisco police department."

FBI Director William Webster made the first disclosure of the 574 investigations in an interview published yesterday in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Webster said investigation of white-collar crime and organized crime is being stressed in the FBI instead of bank robbery, fugitive and auto theft cases that had been the meat and potatoes of the FBI's job.