

22

## MOTIVE UNCLEAR IN F.B.I. DISMISSAL

Aides Imply Callahan Ouster  
Is Unrelated to Burglary  
or Kickback Inquiries

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 17—The mystery surrounding the abrupt dismissal of the second-ranking official of the Federal Bureau of Investigation deepened today amid suggestions from several Justice Department sources that the auction was unrelated to either of the two criminal investigations of the bureau now under way.

The official, Nicholas P. Callahan, 62 years old, was discharged yesterday by the F.B.I. director, Clarence M. Kelley. Mr. Kelley declined to elaborate on his motive, citing the Justice Department's "continuing investigations of various allegations" of wrongdoing concerning past and present F.B.I. officials.

Those allegations involve a series of burglaries and illegal break-ins conducted by F.B.I. agents in recent years, and also the suspicion that some bureau executives may have accepted gratuities from private companies from which the agency bought a variety of equipment.

### No Burglary Link Seen

One well-placed Justice Department source said, however, that he knew of no evidence that Mr. Callahan had known or approved of the burglaries. Another equally well-informed source said that department lawyers investigating the alleged kickbacks had not found any indication so far of financial impropriety by Mr. Callahan, who headed the bureau's purchasing division before Mr. Kelley promoted him to associate director in 1973.

This source said that some unrelated wrongdoing by Mr. Callahan, which he would not describe, had been uncovered in the course of the kickback investigation.

That disclosure, coupled with Mr. Kelley's refusal to explain his action on the ground that the Justice Department's crim-

inal inquiry into some F.B.I. operations was continuing, thus raised the possibility that a third area of illegal activity had come to the department's attention.

Mr. Callahan, whose career in the F.B.I. spans four decades, had long been eligible for retirement with full benefits. One source said recently that he had been planning for some months to retire at the end of July.

### Hoover Loyalist

In either case, Mr. Kelley's decision to demand the resignation of his top deputy appeared to underscore the seriousness of the situation involving Mr. Callahan, who achieved power in the F.B.I. under the late J. Edgar Hoover and who has remained a Hoover loyalist while serving under each of his three successors.

One Justice Department official said that Mr. Kelley would not have taken such a "brutal" step "unless there was some particular reason," and he added that the decision had been Mr. Kelley's alone.

A department spokesman said that Attorney General Edward H. Levi, Mr. Kelley's immediate superior, had been advised in advance by Mr. Kelley of his intention to remove Mr. Callahan. No replacement has been named.

The F.B.I. burglaries, which are being investigated by J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the Justice Department's civil rights division, were directed at members and leaders of a variety of radical political groups during 1972 and 1973.

### Later Ones Occurred

Mr. Kelley had insisted previously that the bureau's practice of conducting such entries in the absence of a search warrant had been halted by Mr. Hoover in 1966, except for a few operations directed at suspected foreign intelligence agents.

In a statement two weeks ago, however, Mr. Kelley conceded that the more recent burglaries had occurred. He explained that his previous assurances that they had not had been based on "the best knowledge that was furnished me at the time" by his aides.

There was speculation last night that Mr. Callahan's departure might have been prompted by Mr. Kelley's discovery that he was among those who misled him about the burglaries, but a Justice Department official said today that that had not been the case.

Mr. Kelley's order to discharge Mr. Callahan was issued from Bethesda Naval Hospital, where Mr. Kelley is being treated for a painful back ailment.