

# FBI Chief, Senators Duel Over

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FBI Director William H. Webster spent a good part of his morning yesterday trying to explain that the recent flurry of disclosures about sensitive FBI investigations was not the work of a public relations man from Hollywood.

Sens. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) and Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), the chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that controls the FBI budget, took turns criticizing leaks about the so-called Abscam undercover operation that has implicated eight members of Congress in potential bribery charges, and the recent unveiling of a Soviet spy.

Hollings called the pre-indictment leaks on Abscam a hemorrhage rather than a leak. And he scoffed at a recent news conference publicizing a KGB colonel who became a "double agent" for the FBI, referring to it as "much ado about nothing . . . fluff" . . . "We can do better than that," he said.

Referring to the constant barrage of headlines about FBI investigations in the past month, Hollings asked Webster: "Are you in charge? Do you have some new public relations fella in from Hollywood?"

Webster replied that he didn't think it was fair to equate the leaks about Abscam with an FBI publicity effort. He said he could guarantee that the disclosures weren't orchestrated. "All we've gotten is flak over the leaks," he said.

"My position is that you make your reputation on performance — after indictments, in the courtroom," the director said. At another point in the hearing he said, "We can't operate the bureau on the basis of public opinion."

Webster said he agreed with the decision to "exploit" the Soviet spy for

classified counterintelligence reasons as well as to tell the American public about foreign intelligence activities. He noted that the bureau wanted to announce the double agent last summer, but the State Department wouldn't agree because of the Iranian crisis.

Webster told reporters after the hearing that the recent disclosures about Abscam, a few other undercover operations and the KGB agent were simply "a coincidence of events." He said it was "silly to think we were

trying to do something about the budget."

Weicker said, too, he was concerned about the FBI's renewed penchant for publicity. He said someone in the FBI or Justice Department broke the law in talking to reporters about the Abscam investigation. "I wish to God they would just do the job of law enforcement," he said.

"They do," Webster shot back. The director said that Weicker "made a bad mistake" in charging that the institution of the FBI approved the

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leaks. "I can tell you that the institution wanted nothing less than those leaks," he said.

Weicker ended his indignant assault on the FBI by saying "there's at least one grouch [in Congress] who's watching very, very carefully." Webster assured the senator that "there's one grouch in the FBI who's watching very carefully, too."

At the end of the hearing, Weicker's mood had softened enough to challenge Webster, an enthusiastic player, to a tennis match.