

# FBI Arms, Computers Missing

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## Agency Says Hundreds Have Been Lost, Stolen

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Hundreds of FBI weapons and laptop computers have been stolen or lost over the last decade, including one handgun used in a homicide and at least one laptop that contains classified information, Justice Department and FBI officials said yesterday.

Nearly 450 firearms are missing—including pistols, revolvers, assault rifles and shotguns, officials said. The list includes 184 weapons stolen from agents' cars and homes, one of which was used in a slaying in the South, the only crime connected to one of the FBI guns, officials said.

An additional 265 weapons are unaccounted for. Many apparently were improperly kept by FBI agents who retired or were fired. FBI officials said they would pursue prosecutions of those former agents.

Thirteen of the 184 missing laptops are also believed to have been stolen, including one that contained classified information related to two closed espionage cases and three others that may contain secret files, FBI officials said.

The new revelations, reported yesterday by Acting FBI Director Thomas Pickard to Attorney General John D. Ashcroft, are the latest blow to the beleaguered law enforcement agency. The bureau already is the focus of four separate investigations, including probes of the Robert P. Hanssen spy case and the embarrassing disclosure that the FBI had not turned over thousands of documents to defense attorneys for Oklahoma City bomber Timothy J. McVeigh.

The search for missing items was prompted by requests from both Congress and William H. Webster, the former FBI and CIA director who is heading up one of the investigations into FBI security problems.

FBI, From A1

Yesterday's disclosures, made by senior Justice Department and FBI officials who declined to be identified, came the day before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on problems at the FBI and are certain to be brought up when senators question witnesses today.

In response, Ashcroft asked Inspector General Glenn A. Fine yesterday to inventory the entire Justice Department's stock of firearms, laptops and other items that might compromise public safety, national security or ongoing investigations. The FBI alone has an estimated 50,000 weapons and 13,000 laptop computers.

In March, Fine reported a similar problem at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which could not account for more than 500 weapons issued to its officers. Six INS weapons were later connected to crimes.

"The department must ensure the highest standards for the inventory and accounting of law enforcement equipment issued to department employees and agents," Ashcroft said in a statement. "In order for law enforcement organizations to be effective, they must have the public's confidence in their ability to perform not only the most complex duties, but also the most basic responsibilities."

The FBI said it has ordered its 56 field offices and other units to conduct an inventory of all bureau equipment worth \$500 or more, from guns and computers to desks

and other furniture. Those offices that do not complete a report by Sept. 30 will not receive money to keep operating until they do, FBI officials said.

"The intent is for that to be somewhat motivating," a bureau administrator said.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), a longtime critic of the FBI's management and investigative lapses, said yesterday that "this disclosure of missing firearms and laptops is another indication of the need for fundamental reform."

"To have laptops missing that could have national security information on them would be atrocious," Grassley said. "For the FBI to have lost firearms and failed to account for them is inexcusable. . . . We need to know if proper procedures for sensitive inventory have been enforced by the FBI."

All FBI agents are issued service weapons—currently Glock .40-caliber semiautomatic pistols—upon graduation from the FBI Academy at Quantico, and many agents have several weapons issued to them, officials said. FBI weapons are also issued temporarily to other police officers participating in joint task forces.

Investigators looked for weapons and laptops lost or stolen since about 1990 and do not intend to go back farther. They did not track lost or stolen ammunition.

The stolen weapons were taken during car break-ins, home burglaries and, on a few occasions, armed robberies of FBI personnel, officials said.

Of the 265 lost weapons, 91 are training guns that are inoperable but could be converted back to use, and 70 others are linked to agents who retired, died or were fired from the bureau.

The whereabouts of the remaining 104 firearms are unknown, though some may have been destroyed or locked in storerooms without proper documentation, the FBI said.

FBI officials, who initially said yesterday that none of the weapons was linked to a homicide, declined to provide details of the slaying for fear of providing incorrect information. The weapon was stolen from an FBI agent in an unidentified jurisdiction and used in a slaying in a different city in the South, an official said.

All weapons reported stolen or missing from the FBI are supposed to be entered into the FBI's National Crime Information Center database, where they can later be matched with weapons retrieved by police. The Firearms Training Unit at Quantico is responsible for keeping track of all FBI weapons.

None of the missing laptops is linked to Hanssen, the recently imprisoned FBI spy who is believed to have given a personal computer with encrypted files to an exotic dancer he befriended, a top official

said.

The missing computers also have no connection to the case of Wen Ho Lee, the former Los Alamos nuclear scientist who pleaded guilty to a single felony count of mishandling classified nuclear data, or to the still unsolved case of a missing laptop at the State Department that contains classified data on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The FBI participated in the investigation of the State Department case.

A top FBI official said the ongoing equipment review, although prompted by outside requests, is part of a "back to basics" approach at an agency that has often seen its accomplishments overshadowed by routine mistakes.

"There is clearly a significant effort underway to raise the level of accountability for things that used to be treated as mundane," the official said. "We need to get back to the basics and make sure we're doing those as well as we do everything else."

Last week, Ashcroft broadened Inspector General Fine's powers to investigate the FBI. But Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (R-Wis.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said the missing guns and computers show the need for a separate inspector general exclusively focused on the FBI.