

# FBI Lacked Inventory Controls, Panel Told

*Missing Guns, Laptops Draw New Criticism*

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The FBI had no systematic way to keep track of its 13,000 laptop computers until last year, and its antiquated security and technology systems have been largely neglected for a decade, bureau officials told a Senate committee yesterday.

FBI officials also said in interviews yesterday that their inventory of guns was similarly disorganized until 1999, when construction of a centralized weapons database was begun.

FBI and Justice Department officials announced Tuesday that 449 weapons and 184 laptops have been reported stolen or lost over the last 11 years. The total includes one gun that was later used in a homicide and at least one computer—and possibly as many as four—that contained classified information.

The gun was stolen from an agent's car in Alabama in 1996, and recovered in connection with a killing in Detroit the next year, officials said yesterday. The bureau declined to release more information about the case and a spokeswoman for the Detroit Police Department said she had no information about a murder case involving a stolen FBI handgun.

The missing guns and laptops are the latest controversy to engulf the FBI, which has been reeling this year after the arrest of longtime spy Robert P. Hanssen and the discovery of thousands of documents that were not turned over to defense attorneys for Oklahoma City bomber Timothy J. McVeigh.

The mistakes have prompted four investigations into FBI conduct. Attorney General John D.

Ashcroft announced a fifth probe Tuesday, in which Inspector General Glenn A. Fine will attempt to inventory all weapons, computers and other sensitive equipment throughout the Justice Department.

Ashcroft said at a news conference yesterday that "any time firearms are missing it's a serious circumstance. And I don't want to overstate it, but I take it very seriously, and the laptops are to be taken seriously as well."

FBI Deputy Assistant Director Kenneth Senser told the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday that there was no adequate system in place until last year to keep track of laptops, including those containing classified information. He also said that "there was no one held accountable" when a computer was missing.

Another FBI official, Assistant Director Bob Dies, told the committee that progress in implementing reforms has been hampered by "recalcitrance" and "resistance to change" among bureau veterans.

"They have a long way to go," said Dies, a former IBM executive who was brought in by former FBI director Louis J. Freeh to overhaul the bureau's computer systems.

The new disclosures sparked another round of condemnation of the FBI on Capitol Hill, as both Democrats and Republicans said the bureau needs fundamental reform to guard against more security and management lapses.

"The FBI has not been strapped for funds; the FBI has been strapped for leadership," said Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.), who favors creation of a separate FBI inspector general. "It's hard to believe the situation has deteriorated to this point."

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), a longtime defender of the bureau, called the missing items "simply inexcusable."

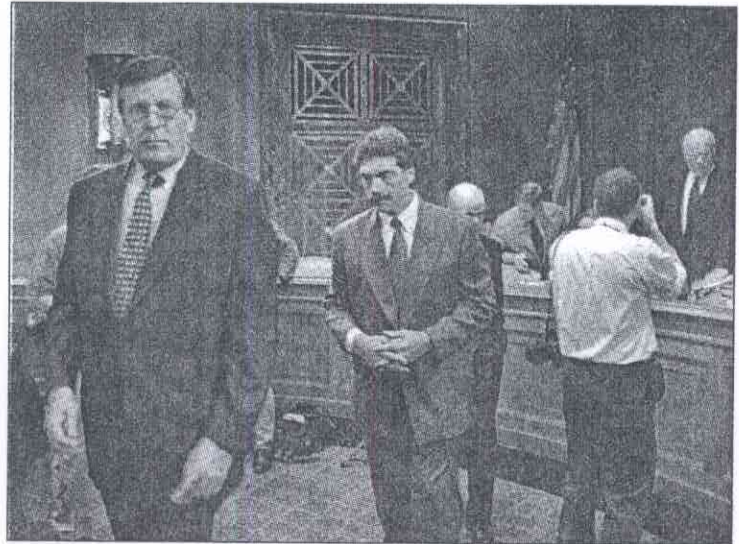
Several current and former FBI agents testified that the bureau is insular and resistant to oversight, saying that senior officials involved in the Ruby Ridge standoff and the deadly assault on the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, Tex., were improperly shielded from scrutiny.

John E. Roberts, unit chief of the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility, said internal probes into misconduct during the Ruby Ridge, Idaho, shooting were fraught with problems. Investigators skipped critical interviews and

did not properly document their activities. Roberts and others who followed up later were met with stonewalling and threats, Roberts testified.

The Justice Department decided secretly in January that no further disciplinary action was warranted against FBI agents involved in the 1992 Ruby Ridge standoff, in which an FBI sharpshooter shot and killed the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver. Weaver's 14-year-old son and a U.S. marshal were also killed.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), disclosed



BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

**FBI officials Bob Dies, left, and Kenneth Senser arrive for Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on FBI lapses. Chairman Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) is at right.**

during his opening remarks yesterday that two FBI agents sent to help in the early investigation of security lapses at Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1996 were diverted to other cases.

A classified report by federal prosecutor Randy I. Bellows found that the FBI did not properly monitor the investigation of former Los Alamos nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee or communicate dissatisfaction with the probe's progress, Leahy said. The report also alleges that concern over the effect of an espionage investigation on plans to open a Beijing office "were a factor in the investigation," Leahy said.

The Bellows report remains sealed, but an edited version has been provided to the Judiciary Committee.

Many lawmakers said they have

high hopes that President Bush's nominee to be the next FBI director, Robert S. Mueller III, will be able to turn things around at the beleaguered bureau.

The missing FBI weapons include 184 guns stolen from agents in thefts or robberies, and 265 others that are unaccounted for. The majority are .357-caliber revolvers or 9mm pistols issued as service weapons, but the list also includes some rifles and machine guns, officials said.

Nearly 70 of the guns were reported lost by agents at around the same time those agents retired, leading officials to believe that the weapons were improperly kept by the retirees. But no follow-up investigation was conducted, according to FBI officials who declined to be identified.