



THE FBI HAS PURCHASED TWO ARMY SURPLUS PLANES LIKE THE ONE ABOVE.

FBI'S AIR FORCE

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has started building its own air force, purchasing two specially designed aircraft originally built for clandestine nighttime surveillance during the Vietnam war.

Television viewers who followed the FBI's exploits through a semi-fictionalized Sunday night series popular for many years probably thought the bureau had an air armada because the agents portrayed in that program regularly used helicopters and light planes for aerial chases, surveillance and various other purposes.

In fact, the FBI had never owned any aircraft. On occasions when planes or helicopters were needed for special assignments, they were leased from other government agencies or commercial chartering companies.

Several months ago, however, the FBI bought two surplus reconnaissance planes initially constructed for the Army by the Lockheed Aircraft Corp.

The new FBI planes, officially designated the YO-3A, look very much out

of place in the era of supersonic jet aircraft.

In Vietnam, the Army wanted a plane so quiet that it could not be detected by Vietcong troops on the ground even when it flew at an altitude as low as 100 feet.



WILLIAM SULLIVAN

Given that order, Lockheed began with a glider frame whose huge wings would allow it to soar for long periods without requiring much power. For a propulsion system, the company initially installed a 100-horsepower engine. In later models, the size was increased to 200 horsepower, but even that is astoundingly small when compared with the 300- and 400-horsepower

engines in many passenger cars.

A thick layer of insulation was wrapped around the engine to muffle the noise. Then Lockheed went back to the earliest days of aviation for a six-bladed propeller made of wood, which makes far less noise than metal when it bites into the air.

Finally, the plane was outfitted with highly sophisticated nighttime sensing devices which could track troop movements in the jungle. Development of the special plane cost the Army an estimated \$10 million.

Rep. Les Aspin (D., Wis.), who discovered the sale of the surplus military aircraft to the FBI, has criticized the purchase on the grounds that "the FBI has provided absolutely no justification for establishing its own air force." The Congressman has protested the sale to FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley, alleging that "the bureau ought to get out of the air power business as soon as possible."

But the arrangement has been defended by William Sullivan, special agent in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles field office, where the two planes will be based and used for aerial reconnaissance in a seven-county area of Southern California.

"It's strictly an experimental thing," said Sullivan. "But we think the plane could be very effective in trailing cars involved in extortion or kidnapping plots, for example, or in rescuing kidnapping victims."

Sullivan said he'd like to experiment with nighttime surveillance, using the sensors developed by the Army. He emphasized that the plane will be used for "investigative purposes only," not for transporting government employees.