

Crime, Chaos Targeted

Officials Fear Aim May Be Forgotten

12/31/75
Last in a series

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Tacked up on the walls of the FBI's Los Angeles field office are a number of posters that ask: "WHAT SHALL IT BE? LAW AND ORDER OR CRIME AND CHAOS?"

To Director Clarence M. Kelley and his top aides, that's a good reminder of what the FBI is all about. The FBI's only purpose, they insist, is to protect the American public from "crime and chaos."

But, they are openly fearful that this point will be forgotten in the national controversy now raging around the bureau over past abuses of its authority in domestic security investigations.

"We admit that improprieties occurred, and we realize that there is widespread concern about preventing future excesses," says Deputy Associate Director James Adams. "But if we're not careful, we're going to lose in the shuffle the overall role of the FBI in law enforcement."

What he means is that domestic security, for all its

importance and sensitivity, is only one part of the FBI's job. Long before it became entangled in the murky world of subversion and espionage, the FBI had built its reputation as the country's most celebrated police force through its ability to catch crooks.

That's still its main function. Most of the roughly 8,600



FBI agents have never worked on a national security case. In the bureau's various field offices, from 80 to 95 per cent of the workload involves crimes where the motive is not ideology but illegal profit.

And, during the 2 1/2 years since Kelley took over as director, the FBI had been undergoing something of a revolution in its approach to combating crime.

Specifically, Kelley has

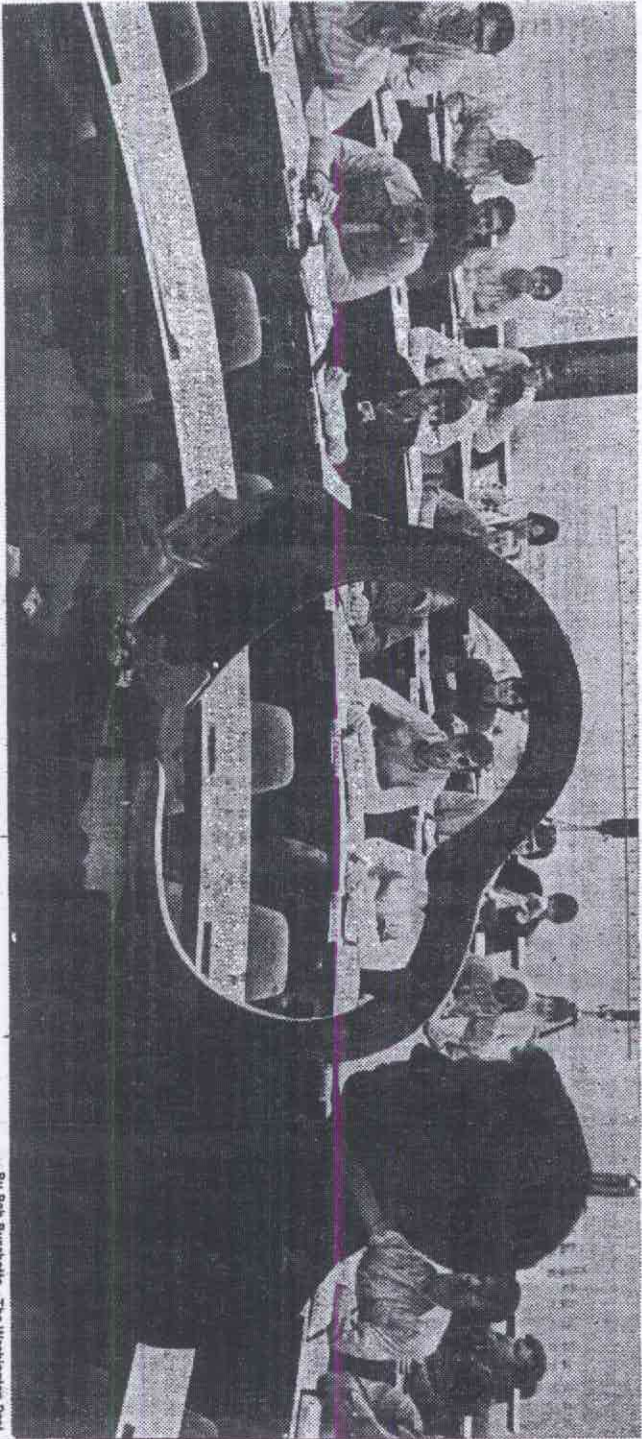
been prodding the bureau to concentrate more and more on what he calls "quality crime"—those cases and general areas of criminal activity that have major impact on their communities or the nation.

Some critics say that the FBI's legendary reputation for crime-busting built up under the late J. Edgar Hoover was undeserved.

This reputation, it is said, resulted from Hoover's skill in inflating to the status of "Public Enemy No. 1" a succession of free-lance, Midwestern desperados killed or apprehended by the FBI in the 1930s. It then was kept alive, the critics charge, by such public relations gimmicks as the "Ten Most Wanted Criminals" lists and a parade of gee-whiz statistics about how the FBI annually sends some 14,000 criminals to prison for terms totaling 55,000.

Knowledgeable law-enforcement figures outside the FBI, including many who are not the bureau's most

See FBI, A2, Col. 1



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post
Trainees are shown in detail the procedure for using handcuffs by instructor John Burke at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va.

FBI, From A1

ardent admirers, say this revisionist attitude is not fair. They say that in those areas staked out years ago by the FBI as its specialties—bank robbery, kidnaping, extortion—the bureau has always been a first-rate investigative agency.

A more valid criticism, they add, is that Hoover was very selective about the kinds of cases in which he would allow the FBI to become involved and that he favored the cases that could be solved relatively easily, thereby giving the bureau an impressive statistical record of arrests and convictions.

During Hoover's time, a 48-year reign that ended with his death in 1972, the federal statute enforced most religiously by the FBI was the Dyer Act, which covers the interstate transportation of stolen automobiles. Such cases are plentiful, easily cracked and easily prosecuted.

For years Hoover resisted efforts to pit the FBI against the far more important problem of organized crime. He reportedly feared that his agents might be corrupted by big-league bribes and by a realization that the effort involved enormous resources of personnel and time to pursue infrequent and risky prosecutions and would not do much to fatten the FBI's statistics.

It wasn't until the early 1960s that then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, using such increasing evidence of organized crime as the testimony of underworld informer Joe Valachi, succeeded in pushing a reluctant FBI into this area.

Many Justice Department sources claim that the phrase made famous by the Valachi hearings—"La Cosa Nostra"—was nothing more than a device to spare Hoover embarrassment. For years, Hoover had been proclaiming that there was no such thing as the Mafia.

Under Kelley, the FBI still has to deal with stolen-car cases. But they're way down the list of priorities. So too are such other petty offenses as minor pilferage from trucks in interstate commerce that used to occupy an inordinate amount of the field agents' time.

Instead, Kelley has ordered the bureau to focus on three big problem areas: organized crime, white-collar or business crime and theft from interstate shipments involving \$50,000 or more.

He also has relaxed the rigid controls formerly exerted by Washington over field offices and has given the heads of these offices freer rein to decide what cases they will tackle and how they can best juggle their agents.

And, in the biggest break with Hooverian tradition, Kelley has told the bureau to forget about the arrest statistics and to give field agents the time needed to work on the new priorities by trimming the number of cases each is expected to handle.

This new approach seems to have met with great enthusiasm in the field. Says Richard C. Burris, who heads the 17 agents stationed in the Los Angeles area's San Fernando Valley:

"On recovery of stolen property, our office went from \$1 million last year to \$9 million this year. That's because we were able to concentrate on major thefts and turn down the chicken

stuff like heisting something out of a carton on a truck."

Two recent cases handled by the San Fernando Valley office illustrate, each in their different way, the results that can be obtained from Kelley's "quality crime" approach.

One started as a simple fugitive case, known in statute language as "unlawful flight to avoid prosecution." A man was wanted in Florida on suspicion of murder, and the FBI received a tip that he might be in California. The San Fernando office investigated, located the man in a local motel and arrested him.

"In the old days, it would have ended right there," says Burris. "We would have shipped him back to Florida, chalked the arrest up on our statistics and closed the case. When an agent's carrying 70 to 80 cases, that's all he can do.

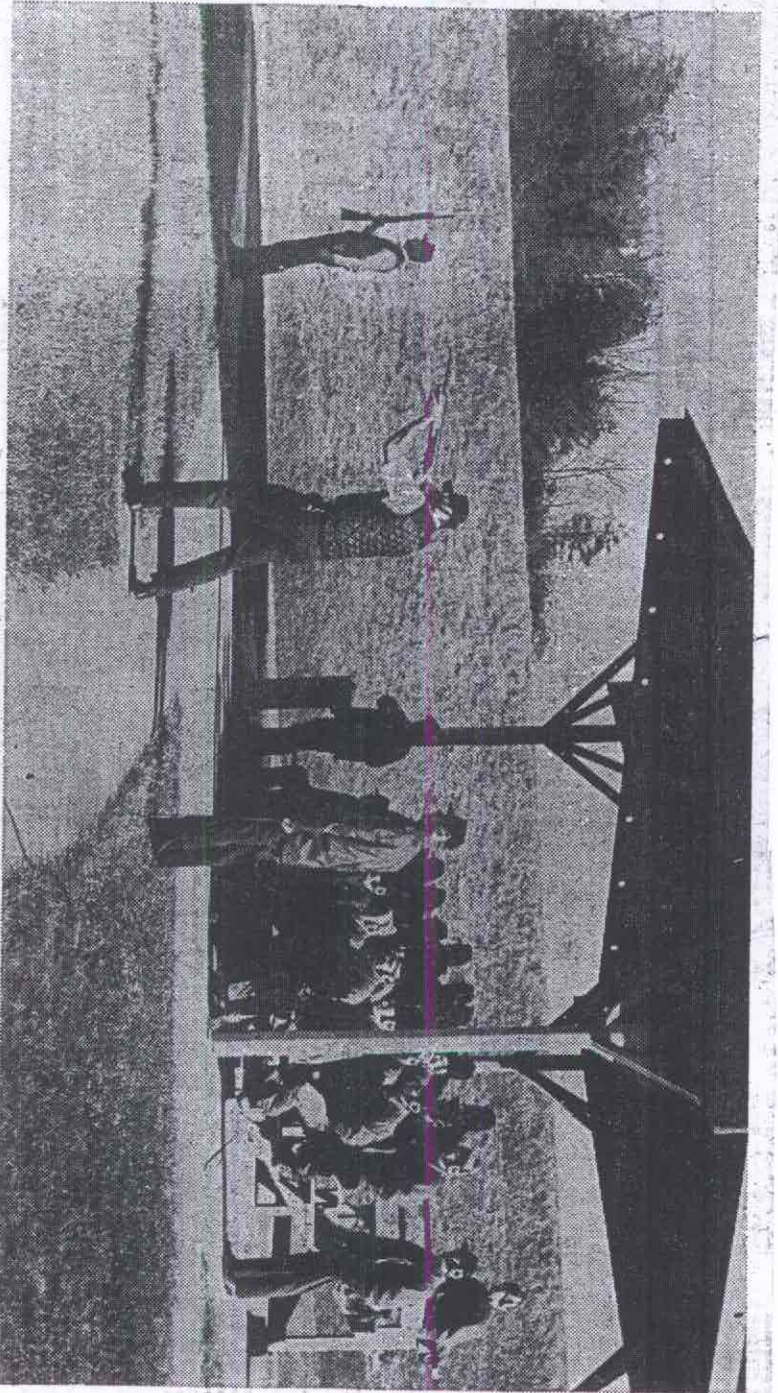
"But in this instance, it was different. During our investigation to find the guy, we noticed that there was something with a very funny smell. Everybody that turned up in the investigation as having some connection with the suspect also had organized-crime connection.

That put up a warning flag that he might be involved in some other interesting business.

"Under our new guidelines, when he was apprehended, the agents on the case didn't just close it out. They were free to probe further. And when the guy indicated that he was willing to talk, that's what they did. It took a hell of a lot of time—interviewing him for days, checking out his story, doubling back on the leads he provided."

What emerged were more than a dozen different cases, some still under investigation and some in which indictments already have been returned. They involve offenses with organized-crime angles—five murders, stolen rare coins, stolen gold, bank robbery, arson and police corruption—that occurred in Illinois, California, Nevada, Florida, Louisiana, Texas and Arizona.

The second investigation involved a "poison-pen" campaign aimed at a San Fernando Valley resident. For reasons that no one could understand, he and his family were subjected for months to a



Teachers at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., run through a demonstration of sheet shooting before trainees get their chance with the shotguns.

By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

barrage of anonymous, obscenity-filled letters.

In addition, the perpetrator, using the fact that his victim came from a Southern state, sent several cleverly fabricated letters to other valley residents, businesses and civil rights groups—all of them aimed at creating the impression that the victim was a racist involved in anti-black activities.

"As a result," Burris says, "the man lost his job, received several threatening phone calls from angry blacks and, at one point, almost had his house attacked by a group of blacks that showed up outside.

"The case seemed unsolvable," he adds. "There was no apparent reason for it. The guy sending the letters covered his tracks brilliantly, and the local police couldn't get anywhere. They were very worried too that it might wind up in serious racial trouble."

The FBI finally did crack it, but only after several agents had devoted more than a year to its investigation. In the end, a neighbor, who had been nursing a grudge against the victim's children, confessed that he had sent the letters.

"It may not seem like a very

major case if you compare it to a big bank robbery or an organized crime matter," Burris notes. "But we regard it as falling within the 'quality crime' definition because of its vicious nature and its potential effects on the community. The police there told us that the threat of racial violence had been very real. And again, we couldn't have handled it, unless our men were free to put in months of investigative work."

Similar examples can be found by combing the files of any other FBI field office. They might be big, headline-provoking matters like the recent convictions on gambling or extortion charges of ranking organized-crime figures in Los Angeles, Detroit, St. Louis and Kansas City. Or, they might be little-noticed cases like a statewide FBI drive against illegal football pools in Montana.

The "quality crime" approach might see the FBI using its powers under the federal banking and copyright laws to tackle such brand-new, technologically inspired aspects of business crime as computer fraud or the illicit copying of films, TV videotapes and phonograph records.

At the same time, the bureau hasn't forgotten the old standbys of criminal activity that it's been fighting since the 1930s. Richard Gallagher, assistant director in charge of the FBI's general investigation division, observes: "Bank robbery is still a favored occupation among professional criminals, and we're keeping an eye on predictions that kidnaping may soon come back into vogue."

Closely related to Kelley's restructuring of the FBI's crime targets is his drive to improve relations between the bureau and the nationwide web of city, state and county police forces known collectively as "local law enforcement."

"Hoover treated the local police with utter contempt,"



JAMES ADAMS

... "improprieties occurred"

recalls one bureau veteran. "He considered them corrupt, and his rules for dealing with them were very clear: Don't tell them anything and don't let them into your investigations unless it's absolutely unavoidable."

He also was very concerned about dominating the local police and forcing them to acknowledge the FBI as the spokesman for law enforcement in the United States.

In imposing the FBI on local departments, Hoover relied heavily on the power to deny them access to the bureau's vast fingerprint identification files, technical facilities and informer network. And he capitalized on their reliance on FBI training.

This training function is a major part of the job in every FBI field office, and agents spend countless hours instructing police in the latest crime-fighting techniques. In some places, it's the only instruction that local police get; and in some states the senior FBI official is automatically a member of the governor's law enforcement advisory council.

The centerpiece of this training system is the FBI's National Academy, started by Hoover in 1935 and now located with the other FBI schools at Quantico, Va. Its twice-a-year courses of several-weeks duration are for carefully selected police officers from all over the country. For years, it was impossible in most American cities for a police officer to rise to a high position without having been through the academy.

Inevitably, local police forces felt resentment against the FBI. It is local police officers who voice some of the most bitter complaints that the FBI is overrated in terms of operations and training, that it rides on the coattails of the police, and then steals the credit from them.

No one knows this better than Kelley, who came to the FBI director's office after 11 years as police chief in Kansas City, Mo. He has given high priority to a number of steps aimed at overcoming the resentments and making the police feel they are the FBI's

partners rather than its satellites.

One gesture has been Kelley's "crime resistance program" designed to provide research and other backup assistance for the struggle of municipal forces against the rising tide of street crime.

Patrick Murphy, president of the Police Foundation and former head of the police in Washington and New York City, describes this program as "pointing up what is perhaps the most significant difference between Hoover and Kelley."

Murphy explains: "Hoover looked at everything from the standpoint of whether it was a winner or a loser for the FBI's image. He would have viewed street crime as a loser and would have stayed clear of it. Kelley, though, realizes that street crime is the biggest problem facing the police today, and his attitude is that even though it's not the FBI's responsibility, the FBI has a duty to try and help out."

Kelley also has prodded his

agents to cooperate with the police and give them full credit for their role in major investigations and arrests. He also has accelerated a move, under way before he came to the FBI, to overhaul the training programs and the curriculum at the National Academy and make them more responsive to police needs.

William Mooney, the FBI's assistant director for training, acknowledges that there was justification for past complaints about the academy's training being overrated and outmoded. He says:

"When the academy began, it was the only thing of its kind. The aim was to fill a void in a lot of nuts-and-bolts areas. But that meant that it taught what was basically a mish-mash of unrelated parts—two hours of this and a half hour of that.

"Now," he adds, "most departments have their own training programs and don't need that any longer." The academy stresses management tools. Rather than teaching officers to use firearms, it teaches them how to construct a firearms-instruction program for their departments, Mooney explained.

There's still a very big question about whether all these changes will take hold in an organization conditioned for so long to doing things according to the Hoover rules. Many bureau veterans say frankly that they still think a lot of the old ways were better.

But Kelley seems to be betting on a younger generation of agents to whom Hoover is history rather than a living presence.

Jan. 1, 1978, is the date for implementing new FBI personnel rules making retirement mandatory at age 60 and discretionary at 55. Its effect will be to move out of active service almost all of the FBI's present top cadre of executives and heads of major field offices.

Although the 64-year-old Kelley is exempt from this requirement, it is not clear that he will stay on beyond Jan. 1, 1978. But, whether his tenure is long or short, the ultimate proof of his impact on the FBI will be in the performance of those agents who inherit the bureau in the years just ahead.