

FBI Set to Expand Network Of Agents Serving Overseas

For 1/21/70
Reuter
The State Department disclosed the existence of a network of 90 FBI agents overseas, and said the number would be increased to 96.

A State Department spokesman said the FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had won approval to open up two new offices abroad and increase his permanent foreign staff.

FBI operations overseas have never been specifically authorized by Congress.

The State Department announced the expansion after a report by syndicated columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak yesterday said the FBI was expanding its international intelligence gathering despite grave misgivings in the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency.

State Department spokesman Charles Bray, in response to a question, said that intelli-

gence gathering was not the function of the FBI agents.

Asked about reports that the agents reported directly to Hoover rather than through the embassy to which they were attached, Bray replied that "as a general proposition" anyone in an embassy would report through the ambassador.

Before the expansion, the FBI maintained staffs—mostly agents—in 18 foreign posts, the State Department said.

Their function, according to Bray, was to develop a cooperative relationship with police and other investigatory agencies in the countries to which they were assigned.

Their job was also to expedite and ensure thorough coverage of leads on cases the FBI was investigating in the United States, the spokesman said. Officially, the agents are known as legal attaches.

Hoover has applied to expand his foreign staff by about 12, Bray said. But so far, he has been given approval for only six more agents abroad by the interdepartmental government agency set up by President Nixon in 1970 to control the number of U.S. personnel overseas.

The State Department spokesman said he did not have a list of the 18 FBI foreign posts and did not know where the two new posts were.

He could not say whether they might be in countries where draft dodgers—resisting call-up for the Vietnam war—were living.

The increase in FBI personnel overseas comes as the State Department is cutting back in most branches at home and overseas in line with a presidential order to reduce its staff by 5 per cent as an economy measure.