

# FBI Moves In, Takes 'Buzzard'

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**NICK F. STAMES**  
... "we're a proud organization"

All last week, under a cloak of darkness, men with guns and walkie-talkies guarded other men who carried secret files, weapons, bullet-proof vests and exotic communications hardware out of FBI offices downtown and trucked them to a lonely spot on the banks of the Anacostia River.

The guards were FBI agents riding shotgun for professional movers transporting the Washington field office, the FBI's third largest, to the top floors of a controversial federal office building at Buzzard Point in Southwest Washington.

Employees of several other federal agencies have refused to go there, triggering a tangle of legal proceedings and congressional hearings and branding the building a bleak and isolated governmental white elephant.

The FBI went to Buzzard Point virtually without a struggle.

The reasons are linked with the law enforcement agency's traditions of pride and discipline and with the plain fact that "there wasn't much choice, anyway," according to the boss.

The Old Post Office building at 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, where the field office has been located for more than 26 years, had become "filthy" and "squalid," infested by roaches, bats and rats, and a leaky firetrap, "the worst space in government," according to Nick F. Stames, special agent in charge of the field office. He said he had been determined to make a move since taking over 2½ years ago.

"We're a proud organization," he said, "and the old offices made it hard for us to be proud."

"Some employees expressed opposition to the move at first, Stames acknowledged. But he said he could not understand the idea of Uncle Sam's troops balking at an order. Personally, he also would prefer a "nice location up on Connecticut Avenue," he said.

"But I've got 25 years with the FBI, and I don't remember ever being asked where I wanted to work," he said.

Stames suggested that employees of other agencies should take the same attitude or quit.

An FBI man came in to cut the cable on Stames' specially "encrypted" (scramble-coded) telephone, used for communications with certain other government agencies, so that it could be moved out of the fading, mahogany-paneled, high-ceilinged office to its sterile, low-ceilinged new home.

In the outer office, boxed files and FBI sports trophies were stacked. Desks and chairs all had masking tape labels, indicating their new room numbers.

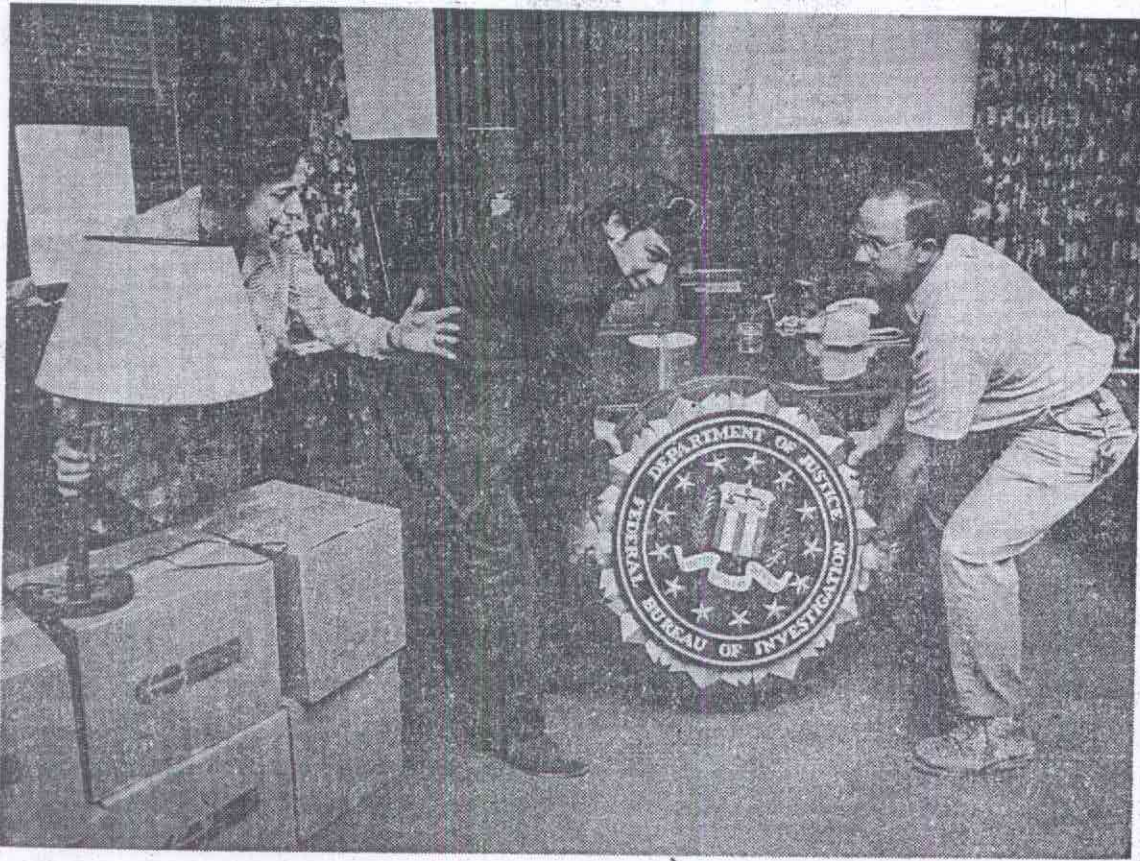
Part of the problem with Buzzard Point is psychological; it's in the name, Stames mused. "Reminds people of an animal that thrives on dead meat. They should rename it Peacock Lane or something."

"For now, he said, "We call it 'The Point.'"

The FBI's Washington field office employs almost 700 agents and supporting staff members. Their most prominent recent case files include

See BUZZARD, C3, Col. 1

## *Out of Buzzard Point*



By Craig Herndon—The Washington Post

Millie Parsons supervises as agents James Gibbs, center, and Louis Padula lift FBI seal during move.

## Building Others Shunned

The 9-year-old romanesque revival structure, with its familiar clock tower, has a huge interior air shaft surrounded by nine stories of offices. "I remember not long after we moved in, a man tried to throw himself over the brass railing of the fifth-floor balcony," Parsons recalled. "Our agents stopped him."

Some of the offices there seemed more like a hideout for crooks than a hangout for police, according to some staff members. "I once arrested a suspect, and when I tried to bring him in here, he kept asking to see my credentials. He thought he was being kidnaped," said special agent Joseph E. Dowling, as he pointed to a grim "interview room" whose walls were grumbling and stained with paint peeling and a rusty pipe exposed.

In line with the planned development of Pennsylvania Avenue NW, the government plans to modernize and preserve the Old Post Office building for cultural, recreational and commercial activities as well as federal offices. "Yeah, now that we're leaving, they're going to fix it up" one FBI man noted bitterly.

The painful history of the Buzzard Point flap was set in motion in 1974, after the Securities and Exchange

Commission requested more space. GSA leased the building despite SEC objections, and SEC became the first of at least four agencies that declined to move there.

City officials, the National Capital Planning Commission, several citizens' groups and employee unions are among those that have opposed lease of the building by GSA.

Federal employees have contended that, besides lacking public transportation, the location is short on parking and eating facilities and presents a high crime risk.

A cafeteria is scheduled to open in the building next month, according to FBI research in the neighborhood, crime should not be a problem, Stames said.

It is unclear who will join the FBI to fill the remaining empty floors at Buzzard Point. A task force of the president's reorganization team is occupying a floor temporarily. Speculation is that some Department of Defense workers now at the Forrestal Building will be moved there to make room for the new Department of Energy.