

WXPost

JUL 28 1973

Ex-FBI Aide Defends Ellsberg Investigation

By Carl Bernstein

Washington Post Staff Writers

Mark W. Felt, former associate director of the FBI has flatly contradicted assertions by former presidential assistant John W. Ehrlichman that the bureau failed to zealously investigate the Pentagon Papers case.

In an interview, Felt told a Washington Post reporter: "It was an extensive and exhaustive investigation and we had no indication whatsoever in any way that the White House was not satisfied with what we were doing."

According to FBI agents who were assigned to the case, the Pentagon Papers investigation was one of the most intensive in the bureau's history, an investigation in which a special unit was established to conduct a probe.

"The problem was that we wouldn't burglarize," said one high bureau official, referring to Ehrlichman's testimony that the White House felt the FBI investigation was inadequate. Ehrlichman has denied giving approval to burglary of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist but has expressed the belief that the burglary is legally defensible.

Ehrlichman, in his testimony before the Senate's Watergate investigating committee, has maintained that the White House "plumbers" were assigned to the Pentagon Papers case because the FBI and its late director, J. Edgar Hoover, failed to adhere to White House demands for a vigorous investigation.



W. MARK FELT
... 'extensive, exhaustive'

"These fellows were going out as substitutes for the FBI . . .," Ehrlichman testified Wednesday.

Felt, who was the No. 3 man in the bureau at the time of its investigation into the Pentagon Papers case, described the FBI inquiry as "a vigorous, widespread investigation, handled as a 'special.'" The term is a bureau euphemism for an investigation accorded extraordinary priority and manpower.

Referring to Ehrlichman's testimony that the White House had attempted "jiggle up the bureau" in its inquiry, Felt said:

"There was no complaint from the White House to Mr. Hoover or anyone at the FBI that I know about."

In his testimony, Ehrlichman said that Hoover's reaction to such purported

White House pressure "was sort of cleaning out the drawers and sending over everything that had been accumulated to that time. Most of what was sent over, I will bet you, was old-hat stuff."

However, Felt and FBI agents assigned to the investigation of Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers case, maintain that information obtained by the bureau was exhaustive, precise, and came in a virtual deluge.

"The agents on the case knew practically where Ellsberg had spent practically every day and every night" during the period in which he was suspected of leaking one source who has seen the bureau's files on the investigation.

According to Felt, "the man hours spent on the Ellsberg investigation by the FBI compare favorably with the man-hours spent on the first Watergate investigation," which Ehrlichman has described as the most exhaustive since the assassination of President Kennedy.

FBI sources said that on July 20, 1971, agents attempted to interview Ellsberg's psychiatrist and that he refused to talk to them because of the doctor-patient relationship. At that point, they said, the bureau made no further attempt to learn of Ellsberg's discussion with the psychiatrist.

According to a high bureau official, the burglary of the psychiatrist's office was authorized in the White House because officials there still wanted the information in the doctor's files.