

FBI Chief Denies Fall In Morale

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Acting FBI Director William D. Ruckelshaus said today that critics of the agency—including his designated replacement, Clarence B. Kelley—have “overblown” the bureau’s leadership problems over the past year.

Ruckelshaus also objected to recent reports that morale has hit a low ebb in the agency.

“Actually,” he told UPI in an interview, “they’ve never been without leadership since Mr. Hoover died and the organization is so organized that I don’t think they have suffered particularly without a permanent head. “I think the situation has been overblown and overstated.”

Kelley, the police chief in Kansas City, Mo., and President Nixon’s nominee for permanent director, told the Senate Judiciary Committee last week that he hopes he can restore confidence and leadership in the FBI. Hearings on his nomination resume today.

“One thing that disturbs me about the FBI at this point,” Kelley said, “is that they are suffering from a lack of leadership and they are feeling that confidence in them has been hurt” by the Watergate scandal.

Kelley’s statement merely echoed many previous reports by agents and observers of the FBI.

Ruckelshaus moved to the FBI from the top job in the Environmental Protection Agency last April 30 when L. Patrick Gray III resigned as acting director. Gray failed to gain Senate approval as permanent FBI director after he disclosed that he willingly gave FBI Watergate files to John W. Dean, former White House counsel.