



# 'Black Bag' Jobs

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THE FBI, without technically telling an untruth, has led the public to believe its agents took part in no more than 238 criminal housebreakings. The actual figure is well over 1000 and may surpass 2000.

These "black bag" jobs, as the late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover called them, were employed principally against suspected spies, organized crime figures, foreign diplomats and a few dangerous revolutionaries.

But Hoover also sent his agents to burglarize the premises of law-abiding U.S. citizens whom the old FBI curmudgeon simply disliked.

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CONFIDENTIAL FBI memos, obtained by the Senate Intelligence Committee, acknowledge that the "black bag" jobs violated the criminal laws the FBI was supposed to enforce. Yet we have learned from FBI sources that Hoover, although sworn to uphold the laws, personally sanctioned more than 1000 of the break-ins.

Not until 1967 did Hoover take steps, in a self-serving memo turned up by the Senate probers, to end the break-ins. Even then we have learned, it wasn't his own idea but pressure from then Attorney General Ramsey Clark that brought the change.

The figure of 238 "surreptitious entries," as the burglaries were politely called, first appeared in an FBI memo to

the Senate committee on Sept. 23, 1975.

The memo accurately but cagily reported that the 238 housebreakings were perpetrated against 14 "domestic subversive targets" during the 1942-to-1968 period. But a careful reading shows the bureau left a hedge. Almost in passing, the memo indicates the figure is "incomplete," based as much on the memory of agents as on actual data. Indeed, Hoover purposely destroyed many of the records dealing with the break-ins, presumably to eliminate documentary evidence of the FBI crimes.

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FROM OUR internal sources, however, we have ascertained that some top FBI officials believe the 1000-to-2000 figure is a "conservative estimate" of the total housebreakings. These include not only burglaries to get information but break-ins to install bugging devices.

One source said the housebreakings go back far beyond 1942 and were not terminated completely in 1968. Under FBI chief Clarence Kelley, however, the bureau has scrupulously followed legal procedures.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, meanwhile, has pushed the FBI hard for more complete break-in figures. The committee will release a report shortly, showing the confirmed housebreakings totaled slightly fewer than 1000. Our higher figures, however, came from indisputable FBI sources.