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Levi Says 3 FBI Aides Not Probe Targets

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Responding to a Washington Post story yesterday about an investigation into alleged financial corruption in the upper levels of the FBI, Attorney General Edward H. Levi said, "It is incorrect to say or to give the impression that the investigation is targeted against three top aides to (FBI) Director (Clarence) Kelley."

The Post reported yesterday that Levi, after deciding an internal FBI probe had been a "whitewash," had ordered a new investigation of John P. Mohr, the FBI's number three official under the late J. Edgar Hoover, and of Mohr's relationship with various suppliers of FBI equipment.

The new, Levi-ordered investigation, Justice Department sources have told The Post, was broadened by investigators to include a probe of the top three aides to Kelley, at least eight other present or former FBI officials with the rank of assistant director or above, and several new areas of possibly questionable conduct by Mohr and other officials.

Justice Department sources also said that Levi wanted Kelley to replace Associate Director Nicholas P. Callahan, and Deputy Associate Directors James B. Adams and Thomas J. Jenkins.

"I have frequently said, and I repeat, that Director Kelley and the leadership of the bureau have my full confidence," Levi stated in a release yesterday. Levi refused to elaborate or clarify his statement.

However, sources close to Levi said that his denial was prompted by the implication that the three FBI aides were "targets" of the investigation, although they would obviously become subjects of the investigation later.

The Post article yesterday said that Mohr remained the principal target of the investigation. The article did not describe any of the three aides as targets. A headline in later editions, however, said "Levi orders probe of 3

top FBI aides."

The term "target" usually refers to a prospective defendant in a formal grand jury investigation where evidence has already been presented that the "target" committed a specific crime.

One source noted that it would probably be several months before the new investigation focused specifically on Kelley's three top aides:

"The investigation is so big that it will have to be taken one step at a time," said one high Justice source. Several other stages have to take place before they focus on those guys (Callahan, Adams, Jenkins). But they will come under close scrutiny down the road."

"Of course Levi wants

(Kelley) to get rid of those three," another source said, "but stories like (The Post's) box him in. Those guys are tough customers. They move when they are strongest. They are now going to come to the A.G. and say 'OK, what have you got on us. Do something with it or get off our backs.'"

One source described the investigation into alleged FBI financial corruption as "really more of an administrative inquiry than it is a

criminal investigation. As a result it will be more thorough, because in a criminal investigation you have more throwaways where things won't lead to criminal indictments, but here you will have it pulled apart from top to bottom to see if there are any improprieties at all."

"The FBI, more than anyone else, wants to make these three and the other FBI officials involved subjects of the investigation so that they can for once and for all purge the bureau by either making a case on them or clearing them," said a source familiar with the investigation.

Source from both the Department of Justice and within the renewed FBI probe, all of whom declined to be identified, emphasized that no evidence of "clearly illegal acts" has been discovered in the first weeks of the probe. It will take close to three months before the investigators even reach the point of declining if a case exists that should be taken to the grand jury, the sources said.

One Justice department source said he believes Kelley would like the three aides to leave on their own. He is "too nice a guy, and too loyal to fire them," the source said.

Another source pointed out that Adams is considered by Kekkey and some Justice officials to be extremely competent and knowledgeable and that his departure would be a severe loss to the FBI. Adams is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the investigative division.

Of particular concern to Justice Department officials is morale in FBI field offices, according to one source. Field agents are reported to regard many of the high-ranking FBI officials such as Callahan, Adams and Jenkins as clerks who were well connected early in their careers and had little if any field experience.

"The perception of that to the field agent is terrible," one source noted. "They say, 'I'm dealing with clerks in Washington who do not understand my problems.'"

Under Hoover, upward mobility in the FBI was widely believed to depend on personal service at headquarters with Hoover and Clyde A. Tolson, his deputy and confident. As a result many of the FBI's top-level positions are filled with agents whose most extensive experience has both administrative and clerical.

Many observers were surprised when Kelley named three such men—Adams, Callahan and Jenkins—as his principal assistants after he became head of the FBI.