

Secret Inquiry

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Burglary Probes Of 20 FBI Men

Washington

At least 20 FBI agents are under federal investigation for alleged illegal burglaries during the last five years — long after the FBI said such so-called black bag jobs ceased, the Los Angeles Times learned yesterday.

Burglaries were said to have been conducted against groups and individuals the FBI considered "extremists," primarily in the New York area.

The investigation, cloaked in more than the traditional veil of Justice Department secrecy, has been under way for about two months. J. Stanley Pottinger, assistant attorney general for civil right, is said to be devoting his primary attention to the investigation.

Inside the FBI, James Adams, assistant to FBI Director Clarence Kelley, has prime responsibility for the inquiry. Adams' office said yesterday he was "in transit" and could not be reached.

Pottinger said: "I cannot comment in any direction about it."

Though it could not be established whether the matter was already before a federal grand jury, it was learned that some agents had been read their Miranda rights — the right to remain silent, to have legal counsel present during questioning and the warning that anything they say may be used against them.

While a source close to the agents maintained the investigation has been focusing heavily "on the little guy — the street (FBI) agent," another source familiar with the matter contended that individuals above the rank of special agent could be prosecuted for their part in authorizing break-ins.

Los Angeles Times