

B142

By Joseph E. Mohbat

Washington, July 22 (AP)- J. Edgar Hoover challenged today a statement by Atty Gen. Nicholas Katzenbach -- his superior -- about the FBI's role in fighting organized crime.

It was the first public disagreement between the two since Katzenbach took over the Justice Department last September.

Hoover's reply followed an interview in which Katzenbach said the FBI's commitment to the organized crime campaign is "beyond question."

But the FBI's chief of 41 years was unhappy about a comment by Katzenbach that the FBI and other government agencies involved in the crime fight ~~are~~ "have a great deal of professional pride and organizational jealousy. While that's a good thing, sometimes it's a problem to get the agencies to contribute their information for the good of others, rather than keeping it to themselves when they think they can make a good case by going it alone."

"There's not a scintilla of truth to that as it pertains to the FBI," Hoover volunteered to the Associated Press through a spokesman.

"There is no organizational rivalry or bureaucratic jealousy here."

Hoover also took issue with a Katzenbach statement that "if there was a tapering off (of FBI cooperation) after the assassination, it's because hundreds of FBI agents were assigned to the assassination."

Hoover replied: "There was no diminution of reports by the FBI to the Department of Justice after President Kennedy's assassination. Our reports continued as usual.

Katzenbach had been asked to comment on published reports that after the death of President John F. Kennedy, the FBI eased off on the organized crime effort.

"The commitment of Mr. Hoover and the Bureau to dealing with organized crime is beyond question," the attorney general said. "Admittedly, before the 1961 antiracketeering laws, the FBI had little jurisdiction in this field and

Katzenbach also had said the FBI has "more agents working on organized crime than at any time in the past."

Hoover and Katzenbach -- the 14th attorney general for whom Hoover has worked since 1924 -- have maintained a good working relationship since Katzenbach succeeded Robert F. Kennedy. And the FBI emphasized today it does not wish to create an argument between the two. But wants to "clear up the record."

Katzenbach on several occasions has gone to bat for the FBI when it was subjected to public criticism. He is known to have Hoover's gratitude for praising the FBI's role in civil rights matters when the Negro community has criticized it.

While Hoover and Kennedy kept at arms length, the FBI chief has made a point of showing up at ceremonies and minor social occasions in Katzenbach's office. And Katzenbach, 43, often has walked down to the 70-year-old Hoover's office himself instead of summoning him.

gm214pcs