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Dash Confirms FBI Illegal Break-in

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and Les Whitten

There have been whispers around Washington that the FBI, like the CIA, has occasionally used burglaries as an investigative technique. We have now nailed down one illegal FBI break-in.

It happened some four years ago during a flurry of bombing threats against synagogues and death threats against Jewish leaders.

The FBI, called in to investigate, became suspicious of a known bigot a few miles from Washington. Tipped off that he might be plotting violence against Jewish leaders, an FBI break-in squad entered the bigot's dwelling illegally in search of incriminating evidence. The burglary attempt was faked to look like an ordinary housebreaking.

Word of the FBI break-in reached Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) during the Senate Watergate investigation. Thinking the incident might have Watergate overtones, Baker asked committee counsel Sam Dash to check into it.

Dash confirmed from official sources that the FBI committed the break-in but that it had nothing to do with Watergate.

Footnote: Presented with our information, Dash acknowledged his role in the incident. The FBI refused comment.

Thurmond's Revenge—We recently described the plight of a lowly Pentagon officer, Lt. Col. Wilfred Ebel, who made the mistake of antagonizing Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

Old Strom, you see, is no ordinary senator. He is also a spare-time two-star general, the commander of Capitol Hill's bay window brigade, the beau de

guerre of the congressional cloakrooms. No military hero is more honored by the Pentagon than is Thurmond who leads the Army's legislative battles in the Senate.

The unfortunate Ebel, as part of a confidential study of the Army Reserves, criticized one of Thurmond's comrades-in-arms. Ebel portrayed Maj. Gen. J. Milnor Roberts, the Army Reserves chief, as lazy and incompetent.

From on high on Capitol Hill, Old Strom snorted with displeasure over such heresy. He protested to Army Secretary Howard H. (Bo) Callaway, an able, amiable fellow, who knows where Army appropriations come from.

Callaway obligingly brought down the Pentagon roof on Ebel's head. The Army inspector general was turned loose not against Roberts, who was accused of mismanaging the Reserves, but against Ebel who had dared to say so. Ebel's name was also dropped from the promotion list, his Pentagon job was yanked out from under him and he lost a bid to become executive director of the Reserve Officers Association.

When we reported all this, the Thurmond apparatus turned upon us. We were assaulted with telephone calls and letters from the Pentagon, Capitol Hill and other strategic places. The general theme, omitting the abuse, was that we had exposed the wrong man and that we should have taken Roberts' side against Ebel.

Old Strom himself sent out letters accusing us of "extreme exaggeration and falsification."

Meanwhile, the obliging Callaway, with an eye still on Old Strom across the Potomac, tried to soothe Roberts' ruffled feel-

ings by awarding him the Army's highest non-combat award, the Distinguished Service Medal.

Our report on Roberts, however, wasn't based upon Ebel's evaluation alone. Not only did we check with our own independent sources in the Pentagon, but we have obtained still another evaluation which Callaway must have thought was safely buried in Army files.

Gen. Bernard Rogers, who heads the Army Forces Command, also conducted a study of Roberts' operation. This study, which was submitted to the Army vice chief of staff, backs up Ebel's evaluation.

The Rogers study charges that Roberts' office caused "the needless waste of tens of millions of dollars in training costs."

On Nov. 4, 1974, for example, Rogers' command handed down

to Roberts "122 troop actions designed to eliminate units which were poor performers and which were excess to Department of Army force requirements." Yet four months later, only eight of the money-saving actions had been taken while "114 remained incomplete," the report alleges.

The study, unusual for its blunt language, concludes that "the current system has almost ceased to function." And much of the blame is laid squarely at Roberts' door, particularly with respect to his failures in getting units into combat readiness.

Yet this same Roberts, who allegedly helped to waste tens of millions of dollars, received the Distinguished Service Medal from Callaway. And Roberts' implacable champion is none other than the old economizer himself, Sen. Strom Thurmond.

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