

1959 F.B.I. Search of Room Of a Newsman Is Reported

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WASHINGTON, July 21—Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation entered the Washington hotel room of a reporter in 1959 to search his belongings for clues to his news sources and for evidence of impropriety in his personal life, according to a well-placed source with direct knowledge of the operation.

The source, who described the entry as one of numerous "bag jobs," or surreptitious entries, carried out by F.B.I. agents after World War II, said that it had been ordered by J. Edgar Hoover, then the F.B.I. director, because of his concern over an investigation of the bureau being conducted by The New York Post, for whom the reporter worked.

The agents involved, who were reportedly attached to the bureau's Washington field office, were instructed to hunt for information about F.B.I. officials or employes to whom the reporter might have been talking and for "signs that he might have had a female in the room or was drinking heavily," the source recalled.

No F.B.I. Comment

"The fellow was clean as a whistle," the source continued, "I don't think they found anything that was worthwhile." He added that a full-time surveillance of the man, carried out at Mr. Hoover's direction by Washington field agents "all over the city," also failed to produce any compromising information or clues to his sources.

An F.B.I. spokesman, informed of the source's account of the hotel-room entry, said that he would have no comment and referred to remarks made by Clarence M. Kelley, present F.B.I. director, at a news conference.

Last Monday, Mr. Kelley provided the first official acknowledgement that F.B.I. agents, as had long been rumored, had conducted a number of break-ins and "surreptitious entries" in the postwar years, including some at foreign embassies in Washington.

But Mr. Kelley emphasized in response to a newsman's question that he knew of none that had not been carried out to secure "information relative to the security of the nation" or to obtain unspecified "foreign intelligence" materials.

The source, who asked not

to be named, said that he was providing details of the 1959 entry to illustrate the incompleteness of Mr. Kelley's knowledge of the subject of F.B.I. break-ins.

In October, 1959, The New York Post published a 12-part series on Mr. Hoover and the F.B.I. that, according to an introduction by Dorothy Schiff, the publisher, was based on the year-long investigation over which Mr. Hoover had reportedly expressed concern.

In her introduction, Mrs. Schiff disclosed that Robert Spivack, then the newspaper's Washington correspondent, had told her that he had been told by an unnamed source that Mrs. Schiff had been placed under investigation by the F.B.I. after The Post began to look into Mr. Hoover's administration of the bureau.

The subsequent articles in The Post series were written and reported by a number of what Mrs. Schiff termed "carefully selected reporters," including Edward Kosner, now the managing editor of Newsweek magazine.

Of the four reporters involved in the investigation who were reached by The New York Times, only Mr. Kosner recalled having stayed during his part in the investigation at the Raleigh Hotel, which stood on Pennsylvania Avenue two blocks from the Justice Department building.

That was the hotel that the source named as the scene of the entry in question. He could not recall, however, the name of the reporter who was its target.