

## 2 Former Agents Say F.B.I. Has Kidnapped

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WASHINGTON, March 19—The Federal Bureau of Investigation has carried out kidnappings of a number of persons in the United States that it believed to be clandestine agents of foreign intelligence services, according to two former F.B.I. agents with direct knowledge of such operations.

One of the former agents placed the number of such kidnappings over the years at "fewer than 10" and said that, as far as he knew, the technique had not been employed by the bureau since the mid-nineteen-sixties.

He said that its use had been occasioned by such cold war incidents as the Cuban missile crisis "when things were pretty rough," and that he was "certain that this is no longer going on."

A spokesman for the bureau said only that the bureau would adopt "a no-comment posture" with respect to the kidnapping allegations.

### A Pattern in Targets

Both of the agents said that, with one possible exception, the targets selected by the F.B.I. for kidnapping were suspected intelligence operatives from Communist countries who had entered the United States illegally with forged American passports and other identity documents.

The use of the kidnapping technique was also confirmed, although not in detail, by two other former F.B.I. agents.

In separate interviews, the two former agents who described the alleged kidnappings left open the possibility that in one instance the bureau had erred in kidnapping a person who proved not to be a deep-cover spy but a legitimate American citizen.

One of the agents conceded, however, that in every case the practice was "completely wrong—completely in violation of civil liberties. No question about it," he added.

But he said, "In the business of intelligence, you're faced with the concept of expediency. That oftentimes leads you into extra-legal activities."

### Alleged Violations

Several lawyers, including representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, pointed out that an alien illegally in this country is by law afforded many of the same guarantees of due process as American citizens.

The bureau's only legal alternatives in such cases, one lawyer said, were to turn such individuals over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for a deportation hearing or to charge them with illegal entry or espionage.

To have held such an individual incommunicado for more than a day, the lawyer added, would have violated his rights to be formally arrested and

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charged with a crime, to habeas corpus and to the assistance of counsel, among others.

Kidnapping, the former agent said, was a last resort used when no alternative means could be quickly found to interrogate a suspected subversive, or to "turn" him into a double agent willing to report to the F.B.I. on the activities of his own intelligence service.

It was, he said, "the type of thing that's never done lightly."

Both men denied that physical torture was ever employed in such cases, although one said that, when a suspect had been located, "You'd pick him up and take him somewhere and work him over."

The victims were often threatened with death as punishment for noncooperation, he added, although neither official recalled any instance in which a hostage had been murdered.

One of the former agents maintained, however, that mental duress was an important part of such interrogations, and he described one case in which a person was seized and detained in an F.B.I. "safe house" for "several weeks."

### Absence Not Noticed

Because the man was not operating under diplomatic cover, as many foreign espionage agents do, and was not otherwise an official personage, his extended absence went publicly unnoticed, the former agent said.

The spy, he said, knew his captors only as "U.S. intelligence agents," at least one of whom was with him constantly.

"Someone slept in the same bed with him. We even went with him to the bathroom," he said.

After weeks of intense interrogation the man broke and agreed to become a double agent and was told, in the former agent's words:

"You are a free man. Do you know what that means? If you leave here and do not keep your promises we will do nothing further to you. But you have made a commitment and we will take you at your word."

The man did keep his word, the former agent said, and appeared at an appointed meeting with an F.B.I. intelligence agent a week later.

But the former agent acknowledged that the technique contained a critical flaw: The F.B.I. had no way of knowing whether the man, or others like him, reported their experiences to their own government, and thus became triple agents.

### 'Playing for Keeps'

The use of kidnapping, one of the former agents emphasized, "was a tough game. That was when you're playing for keeps," he said.

He said that, to his knowledge, it was never employed against the domestic left or

organized crime figures, but was reserved for operatives of the Soviet K.G.B., or secret police, or representatives of other Soviet-bloc intelligence services.

The technique was particularly useful, he explained, when the F.B.I. feared that it was about to lose track of a suspected agent posing as an American citizen.

"You'd identify your man and follow him to develop who he was contacting here," the former agent said, "but you always ran the risk of losing him in 200 million people."

One instance in which that concern played an important part was described by the two former agents.

In the early nineteen-sixties, they recalled, a man walked casually into the recorder's office in a rural Middle West county seat near the Canadian border and asked for a copy of his birth certificate.

The man explained to the clerk that he had left the region



when he was a small child and was now seeking to document his family history. The name he gave was that of a former resident of the county, someone whom the records clerk and others there remembered had suffered a permanent pelvic injury as a youth.

The inquiring man appeared to walk perfectly, however, and the townspeople, their suspicions piqued, notified the local office of the F.B.I.

"Thank God the resident agent was on the ball," one of the sources said, "and went over and checked the matter out."

#### Linked to Soviet

The F.B.I., he said, placed the mysterious stranger under surveillance and eventually became convinced that he was a Soviet intelligence agent who had penetrated the United States illegally.

When the local F.B.I. agents became concerned that they would lose the suspect, the source recounted, a decision was made "to hit him."

After receiving authorization directly from J. Edgar Hoover, the late F.B.I. director, a specially picked team of agents seized the suspect and rushed him to a secluded "safe house" of the bureau for interrogation, the two sources said.

One of the former agents described the interrogation as a "stern" one, and the other added that "this was rough business," though neither provided specific details of the ordeal to which the man was subjected.

Both sources described the operation as a success but declined to elaborate on its precise disposition or the subject's present whereabouts.

One of the former agents maintained, however, that none of the suspected espionage agents involved in these operations had ever died as a direct result of the kidnapping or interrogation, or while attempting to escape.

The former agent said that although the bureau never

operated a formalized "kidnaping squad," at one time there was a coterie of agents who "could and would" carry out illegal high-risk operations such as burglaries and kidnappings.

But by the mid-nineteen-sixties, he said, these men had become convinced that Mr. Hoover would no longer back them and they refused to undertake such work without "paper" or written authorizations, which Mr. Hoover was unwilling to give.

#### Too Dangerous to Accept

"You'd call a guy up and ask him to do something," the source recalled, "and he'd remind you that he had two kids in college and he could see his retirement down the road."

"This work was exceedingly dangerous," the second former F.B.I. man said. "You could get shot, you could get arrested."

The first former agent confirmed these points, adding that no mention of kidnapping was

ever made in writing and that consequently no record of it exists within the bureau's files.

Knowledge of the kidnapping operations was "very, very closely held," he said, being limited to Mr. Hoover, who personally approved each of them; a handful of top officials, and the agents in the field who carried them out.

"Nobody will admit a damn thing," he said, pointing out that the crime of kidnapping carries no statute of limitations.

The lawyers interviewed in connection with the legality of these operations said, however, that Federal and state kidnapping statutes had probably not been violated by the agents who carried out the abductions, since no ransom was extracted.

Because "the best interests of the country would not be served by pursuing that investigation," the man declined to identify either the F.B.I. agents or the suspected subversives involved in the kidnappings.