

Ex-Hoover Deputy Denies FBI Lax in Ellsberg Case

Washington

Mark W. Felt, former associate director of the FBI, has flatly contradicted assertions by former presidential assistant John W. Ehrlichman that the bureau failed to zealously investigate the Pentagon papers case.

In an interview, Felt told a Washington Post reporter: "It was an extensive and exhaustive investigation and we had no indication whatsoever in any way that the White House was not satisfied with what we were doing."

According to FBI agents who were assigned to the case, the Pentagon papers investigation was one of the most intensive in the bureau's history, an investigation in which a special unit

was established to conduct the probe.

"The problem was that we wouldn't burglarize," one high bureau official, said referring to Ehrlichman's testimony that the White House felt the FBI investigation was inadequate.

Ehrlichman, in his testimony before the Senate's Watergate investigating committee, has maintained that the White House "plumbers" were assigned to the Pentagon papers case because the FBI and its late director, J. Edgar Hoover, failed to adhere to White House demands for a vigorous investigation.

Felt, who was the number 3 man in the bureau at the time of its investigation into the Pentagon papers case, described the FBI inquiry as

"a vigorous, widespread investigation, handled as a 'special.'" The term is a bureau euphemism for an investigation accorded extraordinary priority and manpower.

FBI sources said that on July 20, 1971, agents attempted to interview Ellsberg's psychiatrist and that he refused to talk to them because of the doctor-patient relationship. At that point, they said, the bureau made no further attempt to learn of Ellsberg's discussions with the psychiatrist.

According to a high bureau official, the burglary of the psychiatrist's office was authorized in the White House because officials there still wanted the information in the doctor's files.

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