

DREW PEARSON's Washington Merry-Go-Round

FBI Cool to Narcotics Duties

By DREW PEARSON
and JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — President Johnson has asked FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover to take over the Treasury Department's narcotics bureau and stop the spread of marijuana, LSD and other drugs among the nation's youth.

The President summoned Hoover to the White House the other day to discuss the plan. Sitting in on the meeting was presidential aide Joe Califano who had suggested the move. He felt Hoover's enormous prestige would help allay public disquiet over the drug craze.

This is a headache, however, which Hoover neither requested nor wants. He is aware that it will take more than his magic name to stop hippies from smoking pot.

It is also unlikely that he can improve the narcotics bureau, whose 300 agents have the highest conviction rate of all federal lawmen. Although they con-

stitute less than two percent of the federal law force, they have accounted for nearly 17 percent of the federal prison population.

They are also a different breed of lawmen than the clean-cut, fact-collecting FBI agents. The Treasury's narcotics force is a carefully selected crew of Italian-Americans, Arabs, Chinese, Filipinos and Negroes who have learned to look, talk and think like mobsters.

Undercover agents have infiltrated the Cosa Nostra from the Syrian deserts to the Marseille waterfronts, from New York City's Harlem to San Francisco's Chinatown. Narcotics Commissioner Henry Giordano himself is the only law enforcement chief who has spent time inside a dangerous criminal gang as an undercover agent. The FBI relies largely on informants rather than undercover men.

The narcotics bureau is chiefly responsible for exposing the

dread Mafia, or Cosa Nostra, which has spun a sinister web over the nation's economic and political life. Most of the top Cosa Nostra chieftains who have wound up in prison were put there by the narcotics bureau.

The ups and downs of the underworld bosses have seemed almost like a parody on the rise and fall of business executives. Few business executives, of course, retire as permanently as do Cosa Nostra bosses who have incurred the displeasure of their peers.

Even the FBI's celebrated Cosa Nostra informer, Joe Valachi, whose confessions shocked the country, was nailed by narcotics agents. Later they sprung him from the Atlanta penitentiary and pumped him dry of information before turning him over to the FBI to exploit. One of Valachi's first statements was that the Cosa Nostra feared the narcotics bureau above all other government agencies.

However, the FBI has better press relations if not a better conviction record. With 7000 agents, the FBI also has more manpower. It will be necessary to divert them from other essential duties, however, if they are to start running down narcotics cases.

The consolidation of the narcotics bureau under the FBI, while it may be popular with the majority who have been brought up on pro-FBI publicity, will cause others to worry about the development of a national police force.

Both the United States and Russia have an important principle at stake in the Pueblo spy ship incident. They have tacitly recognized that the more they know about each other's operations, the better the chance of preventing war.

The element of surprise frequently contributes to war.

When nations don't know what others are doing they panic. This is especially true in these days of nuclear missiles when the nation which gets a 15-minute start may knock out the enemy's cities and win.

This is why the United States was careful to use the hot line to Moscow to explain the take off of U.S. planes from the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean after the USS Liberty was attacked off the coast of Egypt last June. We didn't want the Russians thinking this was a surprise attack on their fleet.

This is also why the Air Force was careful to broadcast uncoded messages that planes would fly over the Bering Sea to drop food packages to starving Eskimos on the islands adjacent to the Siberian Islands. Otherwise the Russians might have suspected an attack.

This is also why the United States has not picked up Soviet spy ships even when they have occasionally strayed inside U.S. territorial waters. We have monitored almost everything the Russians have done, and have no objection to their monitoring our movements. It eliminates surprise. And mistakes caused by surprise constitute the chief risk of war in this nuclear age.

Khrushchev was very frank about his spying on the United States. When in Cairo in 1964 he told us:

"President Johnson has been taking pictures of our military bases from his satellites for two years. And we have been taking pictures of your bases from our satellites.

"I should be delighted to sit down with the President and compare photos to see which are the best."