

2 Former Agents Say F.B.I. Has Kidnaped

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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 "low 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 "no comment" posture with respect to the kidnapping allegations.

A Pattern in Targets

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

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

In separate interviews, the two former agents, who described the alleged kidnappings as "open" because the bureau had no knowledge of the process.

One of the agents said that the bureau had "deep knowledge" of the process.

But he said that the bureau of intelligence had "made a commitment with the concept of expediency. That of course leads you into extra-legal activities."

Alleged Victims

Several former F.B.I. intelligence representatives, who were appointed out of their own volition to investigate the activities of the new recruits of the bureau, said that they had "observed" the process as it unfolded.

The agents' stories, legal alternatives in such cases, one lawyer said, "would be to turn such individuals over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service."

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

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 non-cooperation, he added, although neither official recalled any instance in which a suspect had been murdered.

One of the former agents mentioned, however, that men in the process were important in the 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 kept in the same room with him. We even went to the bathroom."

The man was kept in an intense intelligence center, he said, and he broke out of the center.

"You know what that means? If you leave here and do not keep your promises, we will

keep you here. But of intelligence, we 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 the F.B.I. intelligence representatives a week later.

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, had reported their references to their own government, and thus became triple agents.

Playing for Keeps

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, and 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."

1 Suspected Foreign Spies in U.S.

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 exacted.

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.