

Big FBI Search In Agents' Deaths

Pine Ridge, S.D.

The FBI brought in aircraft and two armored personnel carriers yesterday to search the sprawling Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for suspects in the slaying of two FBI agents.

Authorities blocked the road leading to the ramshackle house where gunfire Thursday left the two agents and one Indian dead. Some 100 to 150 rifle-carrying FBI agents, plus another 20 to 40 Bureau of Indian Affairs officers, were searching the wooded hill near the house.

At press briefings in Pine Ridge, FBI spokesman Thomas Coll said the bureau brought in the armored personnel carriers, several National Guard jeeps, a helicopter and a light airplane to use in the search.

He said the armored vehicles were considered necessary "to protect agents in case they get caught in gunfire." No National Guardsmen were involved in the search, he added.

In addition to searching the wooded area near the house, agents interviewed reservation residents in an effort to learn how many people had been in the house and who they were.

One of the agents managed to get off a radio distress call before his death, and Bureau of Indian Affairs officers rushed to the house. But the estimated 20 to 30 persons in the house were able to flee, apparently



UPI Telephoto

RONALD WILLIAMS
Numerous bullet wounds

through a ravine into the hills. No arrests were made.

The FBI and Indian spokesman disagree about what happened at the house. An FBI spokesman in Minneapolis gave this account:

Agents Jack R. Coler and Donald A. Williams, both 28, drove to the house with warrants charging four men with kidnaping, robbery and assault with a deadly weapon.

"Someone opened fire on them. They were apparently wounded," the spokesman said.

He said the agents apparently got back in their car and one managed to radio for help.

Then, he said, "they were dragged from the car, and 15 to 20 shots were pumped into them."

Many of the shots were fired into the agents' heads, and Special FBI Agent Joseph Trimbach said at the scene: "We do not know if they were alive when they were shot in the head."

A third agent came under fire about a mile away after he responded for the call for help but he escaped injury, the spokesman said.

AIM leader Russell Means, reached by telephone in Bismarck, N.D., said he had talked by phone with Indians on the scene and was told that the agents walked into the house and pushed around the Indians inside. He said he was told a scuffle ensued and an agent drew a gun and shot the Indian.

A spokesman for the Wounded Knee Legal Offense-Defense Committee in Rapid City, S.D., said he had been told the same story. He also said he fears a dragnet on the reservation, with authorities arresting Indians at random.

South Dakota Attorney General William Janklow said, "It looked like an execution. They were riddled with bullets." And Governor Richard Kneip said information given him by authorities indicated the agents were lured into an ambush.



UPI Telephoto

JACK H. COLER
Slain FBI agent

The reservation measures 3150 square miles, mostly dusty prairie and is bigger than the state of Delaware.

The old one-story house sits near a dirt road, 12 miles northwest of the village of Pine Ridge and three miles from the small village of Oglala. It is in a fairly remote settlement of six houses, separated from wooded hills by about a half-mile of grassland.

The shooting scene is about 12 miles from Wounded Knee, the hamlet in which two Indians were killed during a 71-day occupation by Indians in 1973. Wounded Knee was also the site of one of the last confrontations of the Indian wars in which hundreds of Sioux were killed by U.S. Army troops.

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