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WASHINGTON AP - FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was criticized and defended in a brief flurry in the House Tuesday for his verbal blast at former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark, whom Hoover called a "jellyfish" and a "softie."

Rep. John J. Rooney, D-N.Y., who handles FBI appropriations in the House agreed with Hoover and said Clark was "a pusillanimous nincompoop" who "couldn't be elected dog catcher."

Rooney told the House that Clark was "ingrate No. 1 on my list."

Rep. H. R. Gross, R-Iowa, said Hoover uttered the understatement of the year in his description of Clark.

Rep. Durward G. Hall, R-Mo., said "Mr. Hoover certainly hit the jellyfish on the tentacles."

But Rep. Frank Thompson, D-N.J., defended Clark for what he called a "fine, upstanding lawyer who has distinguished himself as attorney general."

Hoover's verbal blast at Clark came Monday in a rare interview published by the Washington Post. The interview followed publication earlier this week of Clark's book "Crime in America," in which Clark accused his former subordinate of "self-centered concern for his own reputation" that degraded the FBI's crime-fighting efficiency.

Hoover, approached independently for comment on Clark's book, refused on grounds he didn't want to give it publicity.

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