

The Federal Bureau of Investigation Guards against Espionage

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A GAIN, the condition of world affairs has made it necessary for the United States to give particular attention to its internal security. Today, every possible precaution is being taken to prepare us to meet any emergency which may arise to disturb that security.

The President of the United States, on September 6, 1939, gave to the Federal Bureau of Investigation exclusive jurisdiction over investigations of violations of espionage, sabotage, and all related matters. This work is being done in close co-operation with the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department and the Naval Intelligence Division of the Navy Department.

Recent Increase in Work

This phase of work increased so greatly during the past year that it necessitated an increase in the number of Special Agents to carry on the investigative work. Additional FBI offices were also opened at strategic points within the United States and in the territorial possessions to handle more efficiently and expeditiously the increasing amount of work.

During the five-year period preceding 1938, the FBI investigated on an average of only thirty-five National Defense complaints each year. During the fiscal year 1938, two hundred and fifty such complaints were investigated and, during 1939, a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty-one complaints were handled. Since September, 1939, complaints in espionage, sabotage, and related matters pertaining to the National Defense have been received at an average rate of one hundred and sixty-three per day.

In addition, the existing emergency has required the Federal Bureau of Investigation to function in connection with possible sabotage and espionage in our industrial plants. Collaborating with the War and Navy Departments, the protective equipment of several hundred factories designated by those Departments and located in all sections of the United States are being surveyed by the Special Agents of the FBI. Such surveys are made keeping in mind the damage that might result to a factory through sabotage in the event of a great national emergency. Attention is paid to protective devices, the elimination of fire hazards, and possible damage by explosives. Recommendations designed to enhance the protection of the plant are made to plant executives and workers, based upon the broad experience of FBI Agents. Excellent co-operation has been secured by the FBI from officials and workers in these factories.

Particular attention is being given those plants in which the War and Navy Departments are interested to a sufficient extent to give them a priority status with regard to the manufacture of supplies and material for those departments.

All investigations in this field of work are carried on by Special Agents whose experience has been supplemented by specific training in matters pertaining to our National Defense. A course of In-Service Training Schools was started in mid-summer of 1939, and Special Agents have been brought to Washington and given intensified courses of training in the investigative problems arising in such cases.

Spotting the Nation from Coast to Coast are more than 400 graduates of the FBI National Police Academy from local, county, and state law enforcement agencies who constitute a reserve force for the FBI. During September, 1939, these men returned to Washington for their annual retraining session, at which time they received thorough technical training in espionage, sabotage, and other measures arising under the National Defense Act. These officers have returned to their localities and have imparted to their fellow officers the knowledge which they acquired. They are officers upon whom our people can justly depend should the need arise for their services.

Co-operation with Other Agencies

In all of its investigative work, the FBI functions in the closest co-operation with local law enforcement officers and organizations in every section of the country. The President of the United States, at the time he instructed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take charge of investigative work in this field, also asked all law enforcing agencies to refer to the FBI any information obtained by them relating to such matters. Accordingly, local and state law enforcement agencies are rendering excellent co-operation by immediately reporting such violations. The FBI is thus able to co-ordinate and evaluate all material for the best interests of our national protection.

If the internal defense of the Nation is to be preserved, there must be this co-ordination and centralization of responsibility, with all efforts directed in an orderly manner by responsible, highly-trained officers, totally devoid of hysteria.

In a wave of patriotism that rises in a country during trying times, there lies the danger of over-zealous groups of individuals engaging in acts which, although patriotic in aim, are un-American in method. We must guard against hysterical action and vigilante attitudes with the realization that the combined attack by Federal and state forces is sufficient so far as investigation and prosecution are concerned.

Beyond the efforts of these law enforcement agencies there is a need for the individual co-operation of all sincere and earnest Americans. This co-operation should be limited, however, to passing on to the proper officials all questionable facts or rumors. An alert, but calm, public is the best defense against traitorous or inimical conduct.