

Rowdy FBI manager got by with a transfer

By Jerry Seper
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An FBI supervisor who threatened doctors and nurses in a hospital emergency room and "verbally abused, berated and denigrated" a police officer called to the scene was never disciplined for the incident and later was transferred to a new job at FBI headquarters, an internal report shows.

Although it found the senior agent's conduct "totally unacceptable and unprofessional," a board of FBI executives recommended against any discipline in the 1997 case. The board said the senior agent, who headed one of the bureau's 56 field offices, was under the influence of prescription drugs at the time of the confrontation.

But a later internal investigation found that the senior agent had not taken any medicine for more than a month and there was no medical information to show the drug he had been using had any side effect that would have accounted for his behavior.

The internal review found that the FBI supervisor was "suspected of being intoxicated" at the time of the incident.

The event is included in a previously unreleased report handed over this month to Senate investigators as part of ongoing FBI oversight hearings. The September 1999 report details the differences between punishment handed out to senior FBI managers and punishment given to rank-and-file agents.

Written by the FBI's Law Enforcement Ethics Unit (LEEU), the report was instrumental in an Aug. 20 decision by then-FBI Director Louis J. Freeh to revise the bureau's disciplinary procedures for senior managers "to mirror those for all other employees."

"Even an appearance of management protecting its own in substantiated cases of misconduct will not only cause forfeiture of an agency's internal police power, but will ruin the agency itself," the report said.

In the hospital incident, the unidentified senior FBI agent had taken his father to a local hospital for treatment when he became "loud and verbally abusive" after refusing to remove his weapon from the emergency room.

Three doctors, two nurses and three local police officers described the senior agent's behavior as "inappropriate, hostile, belligerent, out of control, bizarre and unreasonable," the report said, adding that his conduct scared other patients in the hospital.

The report said that after one police officer had been verbally assaulted, others were called to the scene but the senior agent left, refusing to identify himself. His car was then stopped and he was ordered out of the vehicle to produce identification. He later refused to cooperate with the local police in an internal inquiry of the incident and denied any abusive conduct.

According to the report, the matter was turned over to a board of FBI executives who heard the accusations and decided the senior agent's conduct was unacceptable, but recommended no discipline because his actions were "significantly mitigated by the effects of prescription medications" he was taking at the time.

Investigators said the senior agent had been prescribed Prednisone, a type of steroid or corticosteroid used to reduce swelling, redness, itching, allergies, asthma and arthritis. The known side effects include swollen cheeks, bloating of the abdomen, weight gain, and insomnia.

The report said the senior agent admitted he had not taken the drug for more than a month prior to the hospital incident.

Investigators noted that the recommendation of no discipline for the senior agent was approved at the highest levels of the FBI. The report noted that in two prior cases, agents at lesser grades accused of engaging in unprofessional conduct — including abusive treatment of others — were suspended without pay and placed on probation.

After a report of the hospital incident and the senior agent's "fitness-for-duty" examination were sent to Mr. Freeh, the agent was transferred to FBI headquarters because he could "not effectively continue to function" as the head of a field office. But, the report noted, that decision was made "to further the mission and needs of the FBI" and was not to be considered "a punitive measure."