



J. EDGAR HOOVER

On May 10, 1924, Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone appointed 29-year-old J. Edgar Hoover as acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and by the end of the year Hoover was named director.

As director, Hoover put into effect a number of institutional changes to correct criticisms made by his predecessor's administration. Hoover fired a number of agents whom he considered to be political appointees and/or unqualified to be special agents. He ordered background checks, interviews, and physical testing for new agent applicants, and he revived the earlier FBI policies of requiring legal or accounting training.

Under Hoover, the FBI grew in responsibility and importance, becoming an integral part of the national government and an icon in American popular culture. In the 1930s, the FBI attacked the violent crime by gangsters and implemented programs to professionalize U.S. law enforcement through training and forensic assistance.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the FBI garnered headlines for its staunch efforts against Nazi and communist espionage. During World War II, the bureau took the lead in domestic counterintelligence,

counterespionage, and countersabotage investigations.

President Franklin Roosevelt also tasked the bureau with running a foreign intelligence service in the Western Hemisphere. This

operation was called the Special Intelligence Service, or SIS. In the early years of the Cold War, the Bureau took on the added responsibility of investigating the backgrounds of government employees to ensure that foreign agents did not infiltrate the government. More traditional criminal investigations, including car thefts, bank robberies, and kidnappings, also remained important.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the FBI took on investigations in the field of civil rights and organized crime. The threat of political violence occupied many of the bureau's resources, as did the threat of foreign espionage. In spite of Hoover's age and length of service, presidents of both parties kept him at the helm of the bureau. When Hoover died in his sleep on May 2, 1972, he had led the FBI for 48 years.



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