



# The FBI in Gaming

by Darren Watts

## Introduction

*"Fidelity. Bravery. Integrity."*

-- The FBI's official motto

The Federal Bureau of Investigation might play a role in any campaign set in the United States in the past century. No government agency has such a high profile in popular fiction, partly due to the intense self-promotion it has carried out since the days of mobsters and tommy guns. It makes an imposing enemy for lawbreakers, a marvelous background for characters of any stripe, and can serve as the employer/motivating force for entire campaigns of wildly varying styles. All too often, however, the fictional portrayals of "The B" (as its agents refer to it) feature some massive factual boners. Here an effort has been made to give a realistic description of the FBI in the "real world" with an eye towards gaming relevance; of course, in any specific game setting its activities, powers and history may vary.

The first and most obvious use of this article is in plot design; PCs are forever doing things that bring them into contact or conflict with the law, and the FBI investigates such a wide variety of crimes that eventually some interaction is almost inevitable. Another use is in character design. If you're playing a group of FBI agents (or agents of a similar fictitious organization), the descriptions will help you fill in appropriate skills and advantages. A concise timeline and online references are also provided.

## Timeline

- 1870-1908** Prior to 1908, the Department of Justice (itself founded in 1870) has no investigative branch, only financial "examiners" to help investigate the primary crimes defined as "federal" at the time, such as bankruptcies and business fraud. When legwork is needed in handling these cases, the DOJ hires private investigators such as the Pinkerton Detectives or "borrows" agents from the Secret Service.
- 1908** Charles Bonaparte, Attorney General for President Theodore Roosevelt, hires a small handful of "Special Agents" to investigate full-time for the Justice Department, and has them report to the "Chief Examiner," Stanley Finch. Eventually this core of agents, which expands in number tremendously over the next fifteen years, becomes known as the FBI.

- 1910** Congress passes the Mann Act, which attempts to combat the menace of prostitution and "white slavery" by making it illegal to transport a woman or minor across state lines for "immoral purposes." As a side effect, the Mann Act gives teeth to federal laws involving the investigation of interstate crimes and the prosecution of fugitives.
- 1912** A. Bruce Bielaski is named the second Chief Examiner and head of the Bureau.
- 1917** On the eve of America entering World War I ("The Great War"), the FBI is given responsibility by President Woodrow Wilson to investigating violations of the Espionage, Sabotage and Selective Service Acts.
- 1919** William J. Flynn is appointed the Director of the FBI, the first to use that title.
- 1921** William J. Burns is named the fourth Director of the FBI.
- 1924** J. Edgar Hoover becomes the Director of the FBI. Under his regime the Bureau greatly expands its power and prestige. Hoover is exceptionally good at publicity, and his relentless promotion of his own organization in the press and popular media, especially during the era of Prohibition and mobsters, creates the enduring image of the two-fisted, "untouchable" G-Man. (Hoover is also very good at making himself covertly useful to the Executive Branch, increasing his own influence by providing Presidents from Roosevelt to Nixon with information about subversive elements and political enemies.)
- 1932** Kidnapping is made a federal crime.
- 1934** Concerns about organized crime spur Congress to allow FBI agents to make arrests and carry firearms.
- 1935** Hoover founds the FBI Academy at Quantico, largely ending the practice of recruiting agents with police backgrounds in favor of training their own.
- 1940** With the specter of World War II looming over the US, Congress passes a law making it a federal crime to "advocate violent overthrow of the government." This was the justification used first by President Roosevelt to have the FBI begin covert investigation into "subversive" groups (which itself led to the COINTELPRO scandals of the 1970s; see below.) Also, a subdivision of the FBI is created, called the Special Intelligence Service, to combat German espionage in Latin America for the duration of the war.
- 1946** Congress passes the Atomic Energy Act, which specifically requires the FBI to "determine the loyalty of individuals with access to Atomic Energy secrets." Armed with this new mandate, the FBI devotes tremendous time and resources in the late 1940s and 1950s to ferreting out Communists in government service.
- 1960-1971** The FBI expands its programs combating subversive organizations, under the umbrella of "Counter Intelligence Projects" or COINTELPRO. The social turmoil of the Sixties and especially the fear of riots, bombings and other sabotage leads to frequent covert investigations by the FBI against controversial people and groups like Martin Luther King, Abbie Hoffman, John Lennon, the

Nation of Islam, and the Weathermen.

- 1963** President Kennedy is assassinated. The crime is investigated at first as a local homicide by the Dallas police, because murdering the President was not at the time a federal crime; Lyndon Johnson issues an Executive Order a few days later allowing the FBI to get involved, and the law is changed in 1964.
- 1970** The Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) is passed into law, giving the FBI a powerful weapon against organized crime by allowing disparate accusations of crimes by a group to be investigated and prosecuted together.
- 1971** NBC reporter Carl Stern files a set of Freedom Of Information Act requests about investigations by the FBI against American Leftist groups, leading to embarrassing revelations about the FBI's illegal wiretapping activities.
- 1972** J Edgar Hoover dies after 48 years as Director. His immediate successor, L. Patrick Gray, serves as Acting Director until being caught in the tangle of Watergate amid accusations of destroying documents and obstructing the investigation.
- 1973** Clarence Kelly, former FBI agent himself and then-police chief of Kansas City, becomes Director with a mandate to "clean up" the Bureau and cooperate with Congress' investigations into alleged COINTELPRO abuses. (The FBI itself maintains that the program was ended in 1971.) The Senate Select Committee holds hearings through 1976, but though several activities of the past are condemned, no files are charged and the Senate seems satisfied that the programs have been discontinued.
- 1978** Kelly resigns. William Webster takes over as Director and oversees the expansion of FBI efforts in battling drug-related crime, counterterrorism, and the Savings & Loan scandals of the 1980s.
- 1987** Webster resigns to move laterally over to head of the CIA, and William Sessions is selected as Director. Sessions is considered an outsider by the rank and file of the Bureau, and there is occasional open antagonism among the senior staffers.
- 1992** An FBI sniper accidentally kills the wife of federal fugitive Randy Weaver during a tense standoff at Ruby Ridge, Idaho.
- 1993** The FBI is accused of mishandling the standoff with David Koresh and his followers when their compound burns down in Waco, Texas.
- 1993** Sessions is removed by President Clinton in 1993 over ethics violations (building a fence around his house with FBI funds and flying his wife for free on government flights.) Louis Freeh is named Director, with the mission of restoring public confidence in the FBI and streamlining the organization for the future. He begins cutting staffing and reorganizing departments.
- 1995** The Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City is bombed, and the FBI leads the investigation.

- 1996** The FBI is accused by several former employees of gross mishandling of evidence at their laboratories, including some charges of intentionally favoring the prosecution in criminal cases.

## Organizational Personality

The FBI generally inspires a fair amount of institutional loyalty. Partly this is a holdover from the Hoover days, when the FBI seemed to operate without much Congressional oversight and the media helped further the pristine image of the forthright, brave, two-fisted agent battling the forces of organized crime. There is no doubt that the Bureau remains the premiere crimefighting organization in the world in terms of resources, prestige, and authority. However, the 1990s were a period of intense second-guessing of Bureau procedures and policies, and in many cases the agency has hunkered down and developed a "bunker mentality" against its critics.

Critics of the FBI point out that they have the lowest rate of conviction and highest rate of declined prosecutions of any government agency, and have been accused of "selective prosecution" in support of various political agendas. Further, FBI agents have a perception within government circles for being "cowboys," preferring the action of "cops & robbers" and showy drug busts to the methodical building of cases against white-collar offenders and corporate criminals. The Bureau also has still not entirely escaped the shadow of the revelation of the COINTELPRO abuses, and some believe programs like this continue against leftist organizations like Earth First! and the opponents of the World Trade Organization.

Despite the public black eyes of Ruby Ridge and Waco, FBI recruitment is still tremendously successful. (No doubt, the popularity of shows like *The X-Files* and movies like *Silence of the Lambs* are at least partly responsible for this.)

## Structure and Jurisdiction

Of all the federal law-enforcement agencies, the FBI has the broadest mandate; basically, it investigates all federal crimes not expressly assigned to another agency. This includes over 200 types of crimes, meaning an FBI background can cover the widest possible range of possible duties and skills. GMs can pit agents against organized crime families, drug smugglers, bank robbers, or domestic terrorist groups, dealing with crimes as prosaic as smuggling or kidnapping or as convoluted and challenging as white-collar embezzlement. FBI agents also investigate crimes such as child pornography, consumer product tampering, telemarketing fraud, or toxic waste-dumping. Any crime occurring on a Native American reservation is also the purview of the Bureau, as are violations of the Civil Rights Act and Equal Credit Opportunity Act. And, of course, there are always threats against the President, Vice-president, or members of Congress to investigate. FBI PCs should never be bored.

In addition to investigation, the FBI has a couple of other major responsibilities. As the best-funded law-enforcement agency in the country, they naturally have the best infrastructures and databases, which they are expected to maintain and share with other federal agencies or state or local officials as needed. The Bureau administers the National Crime Information Center (which provides information to law-enforcement agencies worldwide), provides extensive training programs, and publishes the annual Uniform Crime Reports. Apart from its own academy at Quantico, VA, the FBI also runs a similar training program at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Budapest, which trains police forces in "emerging democracies." The

FBI is also responsible for background checks on nominees for "sensitive" government posts, including Presidential appointees and federal court judges. Somewhat less officially, since the days of J. Edgar Hoover the FBI has had a reputation for serving as the direct covert investigation agency of the President, with several reputed shady activities only justified by executive order and with minimal openness.

The FBI works in concert with the United States Attorneys, providing them with information about crimes that they can choose to prosecute. Title 28, Section 533 of the United States Code places the FBI firmly under the Executive Branch umbrella: officials in the Bureau are appointed to work on behalf of the Attorney General to "detect crimes against the United States." The Directorship of the FBI is a Presidential appointment, with "the advice and consent of the Senate," serving a ten-year term.

The Director is assisted in his duties by a Deputy Director. Below them are thirteen Assistant Directors; eleven of those are responsible for a Division and assisted by a Deputy Assistant Director of their own. There are also Assistant Directors in the Office of Public & Congressional Affairs, in charge of reporting on what the FBI actually accomplishes, and the Office of Public Responsibility, which handles civilian complaints. There are two other special posts equivalent to an Assistant Director in authority: the General Counsel for the Bureau, and the Equal Employment Officer (who makes sure federal hiring standards are met).

The eleven Divisions of the Bureau have confusing titles, and it is frequently difficult to pierce the bureaucracy and determine which division handles what (complicated by the similarity between many of their names), but here is a listing: Administrative Services, Counterterrorism, Criminal Investigations, Criminal Justice Information Services, Finance, Information Resources, Inspection, Investigative Services, Laboratory, National Security, and Training. Greater detail is provided on several of these below.

The FBI has over 11,000 active Special Agents (in keeping with the original terminology used by Bonaparte), and 16,000 assorted support employees. This massive force maintains 56 field offices (including one in Puerto Rico), in various metropolitan areas of the US. Each is run by a Special-Agent-In-Charge (SAC), except for the offices in Washington DC, New York City, and Los Angeles. These largest three offices are headed by an Assistant-Director-In-Charge, due to the large numbers of agents and support staff they must manage. Each SAC has an Assistant SAC. Each Field Office is responsible for several smaller Resident Agencies, which are satellite offices in less populated areas and are run by Supervisory Senior Resident Agents (SSRAs.) Finally, there are four Information Technical Centers, where the computer databases are maintained, in different areas of the country (Pocatello, ID; Fort Monmouth, NJ; Butte, MT; and Savannah, GA).

The FBI has also expanded its presence overseas in the last two decades. The International Operations Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division coordinates all overseas activities, which require the permission of the host country and coordination with the State Department, generally through one of the 38 Legal Attache offices scattered around the world. This branch also coordinates the FBI's relationship with Interpol and with foreign law enforcement agencies that have permission to operate within the United States.

Some of the other divisions require further details. The Criminal Justice Information Service (CJIS) Division maintains the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, which includes the national fingerprint database, as well as databases on missing persons, state arrest records, etc., and is generally available to assist any local authority. This is a tremendous resource for any hacker/researcher PC, official or otherwise. Another subdivision with a lot of

gaming potential is the Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), formed in 1994 as a multi-divisional task force for emergency response to major terrorist activities such as bombings, hijackings, etc., as well as hostage and barricade scenarios. The Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) has been combined into the CIRG recently. A third subdivision that can be an interesting addition to a modern-day scenario is the Disaster Squad, a subdivision of the FBI Labs Division that specializes in the rapid identification of the deceased at disaster sites.

## The Special Agent

A Special Agent of the FBI begins his or her career at the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. In order to qualify as a Special Agent, applicants must have a ST and HT of at least 11, and an IQ and DX of at least 10. Eyesight and hearing must be at least average, and the applicant must have no physical disadvantages that would interfere with meeting the physical training standards. Candidates also have to pass several interviews and a full background check, so many of the most severe mental disadvantages are also disqualifying. They must be between the ages of 23 and 37, and have a four-year degree at an accredited institution. Agents who have degrees in accounting or law or speak a foreign language of particular use to the Bureau (for example, Spanish, Russian, or Arabic) will be preferred.

The Academy itself sits on 385 acres of lovely woodlands, and includes several dorms, a dining hall, library, chapel, auditorium, and a world-class forensics lab. There are several gymnasias, over a dozen shooting ranges, a driving track for training, and an entire fake "town" of building facades called "Hogans Alley" for training in urban tactics and surveillance. The Agent training program is sixteen intensive weeks, in which the trainee takes classroom courses alternated with physical training. A graduate of the Academy should have the skills listed below:

- At least one of Law (Federal Crime)-14, Accounting (Forensic)-14 or fluency in at least two useful languages besides English. If Law (Federal Crime) is not used for this qualification, the agent must still spend at least 2 points on that skill.
- At least 4 points in: Criminology, Gun (Pistol)
- At least 2 points in: Driving (auto), Forensics, Judo, Karate, Shadowing
- At least 1 point in: Computer Operation/TL 7, First Aid/TL 7, Gun (rifle), Handcuff\*, Holdout, Interrogation Leadership, Psychology, Research, Stealth, Tactics
- At least 1/2 point in: Administration, Diplomacy, Fast-Draw (pistol), Gun (Light Automatic), Running, Writing

\* Handcuff is a new P/A skill, defaulting to DX-3, the successful use of which allows the user to apply ordinary handcuffs to a docile or surprised subject (or a resisting subject who is pinned, as B112) in a single action. Without this skill, applying handcuffs takes 2d6 seconds. Handcuffs cannot be applied to a subject who is resisting without pinning or otherwise immobilizing him.

At the end of the training period, the agent begins a two-year probationary period. They will be assigned to a field office (the Bureau will consider any requests for postings, but retains final decision based on its own needs) and given a "mentor," usually a Special Agent with at least five years experience, to oversee the continuing training in the field. Special Agent status gives the agent the Legal Enforcement Powers advantage at the 10-point level, plus Administrative Rank (FBI) at the 5-point level. Also, the FBI itself becomes a patron, Very Powerful, Quite Often. A Duty (Almost All the Time) is added, making the entire basic package (without including required skills) worth 50 points.

Keep in mind that this package is for Special Agents, and it's entirely possible to have FBI

employment in a character's background without any of these requirements, if they've been employed in some other capacity. The FBI employs over 16,000 support staffers in various areas like lab technicians, programmers, fingerprint specialists, translators, lawyers, chemists, etc. All that is required for these positions is a physical (ST & HT of at least 9), passing a low-level background check, and possession of relevant professional skills. Many support staffers have at least a basic self-defense course (say, at least 1/2 point in Judo) and firearms training, but even this is not a requirement for most positions.

The Administrative Ranks for the FBI are as follows:

- *Rank 7*: Director
- *Rank 6*: Deputy Director
- *Rank 5*: AD or other Divisional Head
- *Rank 4*: Deputy AD or ADIC
- *Rank 3*: SAC
- *Rank 2*: SSRA or Asst. SAC
- *Rank 1*: Special Agent
- *Rank 0*: Support Staff

Please note that at any given time Ranks 6 and 7 are unique positions. As suggested on p. B22, no PC should begin with an FBI rank above 3.

Agents carry credentials, handcuffs and sidearms (typically .38s or .45s of various makers- the FBI uses a wide range of firearms). Special Agents are expected to maintain a fairly strict dress code.

## References and Further Reading

- [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov) - The official site of the Bureau, with history and a massive collection of other relevant links. Look here first, but remember this is the official site and nothing critical of the FBI will be found.
- [www.trac.syr.edu](http://www.trac.syr.edu) - Home of the TRAC pages, independently studying the effectiveness of several government agencies.
- [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) - One of the best general research sites on the web. Marvelous magazine article archives, only a little out-of-date.

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