

Swearing-in Ceremony - February 23, 1978
FBI Director William H. Webster

Attorney General Bell: Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Mr. Chief Justice, Chairman Eastland, Chairman Rodino, Former Director Kelley, Acting Director Adams, other distinguished guests. Ladies and gentlemen, this is indeed a historic occasion. We have met to change the leadership of the FBI, one of our great Federal institutions, the finest investigative agency in the world. The FBI, as we know it, traces its history from 1924 when Chief Justice Stone, then the Attorney General, appointed J. Edgar Hoover as the Director. Since that time, there have only been two Directors who were confirmed by the Senate--Mr. Hoover and Clarence Kelley, who is our outgoing Director. Judge Webster will be the third Director of the modern FBI. The actual history of the FBI traces back to 1909, according to historians who've not made a careful study of the FBI, when Attorney General Bonaparte from Maryland decided that we had to have some investigative agency. Incidentally this auditorium

Attorney General Bell:
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was named for Attorney General Bonaparte. The truth is, Mr. President, that I've done a good deal of studying to see if we couldn't trace the FBI back to Georgia. I find, that as every one knows, there was no Department of Justice until 1870. We had an Attorney General from 1789, the First Congress. But in 1870 an Attorney General from Georgia, the last one we had, whose name was Amos Ackerman, was appointed by President Grant and that was the year the Department of Justice was created. We don't know anything about Mr. Ackerman in Georgia because he was appointed by U. S. Grant. The fact is that he got the first appropriation from the Congress to form an investigative unit to assist the Attorney General and the U. S. Attorneys over the country. That appropriation was annual thereafter and it was that money that was finally used, along with some more, to establish the Bureau of Investigation. Most of the work of the U. S. Attorneys at that time

Attorney General Bell:
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was done by U. S. Marshals. This is something else we want to bring to the President's attention. They were able to save a good deal of money. They were paid one dollar for capturing fugitives ...alive. If they were brought in dead they got no money at all and had to pay the burial expense. The high point, probably, of law enforcement, prior to the establishment of the FBI, was in 1903 when Attorney General James McReynolds, late on the Supreme Court, was in office. Someone got in touch with him seeking help to find a kidnaped daughter. He replied, "You should furnish me with the names of the parties holding your daughter in bondage, the particular place where she is being held and the names of the witnesses by whom the facts can be proved." At any rate, in 1909 Attorney General Bonaparte finally convinced President Theodore Roosevelt that we had had to have something like the FBI so it was all set up. President Taft came in

Attorney General Bell:
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12 days later. Attorney General Wickershams who was then the new U. S. Attorney set up the Bureau of Investigation and it retained that name until 1935 when it became the Federal Bureau of Investigation. One other thing and I'll stop. I often wondered why the Agents are called Special Agents. The reason was that when, back about 1880, they first got something like a Bureau of Investigation going, it was under a general agent so the people who worked under the general agent were called examiners or Special Agents. It is now my pleasure to present the Chief Justice of the United States for remarks and to administer the oath to our new Director.

Chief Justice Burger:

Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Mr. Attorney General, Senator Eastland, Mr. Rodino, Mr. Kelley and my colleague, the, almost the late Judge Webster and Mrs. Webster. In the spirit of the occasion even though we are in a house, a building, which is part of the Executive Branch under the

Chief Justice Burger:
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control of the President of the United States, I hope the President will forgive me if I register a complaint with him. I know he does not have enough complaints. My complaint is, Mr. President, that not content with taking one of our most distinguished United States judges for your Attorney General, and a very distinguished Attorney General he is, you then proceeded to take another equally distinguished Federal judge for the Solicitor General. I thought you were going to stop there, but then you went on after Frank Johnson and Frank McGarr and Judge Webster and, I point out to you, Mr. President, that each of these was an interstate activity coming under Federal jurisdiction. But the Judicial Branch of the United States, I am authorized to say, will grant you a general amnesty if you will promise to go a little bit easier on the Federal Judiciary and not take any more of our best. Seriously, Mr. Webster, Judge Webster, I suppose we must call him Mr. Webster

Chief Justice Burger:
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now or Director, has been a colleague of many of us here today for quite a long time. He now assumes the leadership of one of the great, great institutions of our country. It has contributed enormously to this country. And under his wise and strong leadership all of us who know him have complete confidence that he will continue that, and not only carry on the great work of the Bureau, but will enhance it and enlarge its contribution to the United States. And now, you're still Judge Webster: Judge Webster and Mrs. Webster, if you will come forward. If you will raise your right hand and repeat after me: I, William Webster, do solemnly swear

Judge Webster:

I, William Webster, do solemnly swear

Chief Justice Burger:

that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States

Judge Webster:

that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States

Chief Justice Burger:

against all enemies, foreign and domestic

Judge Webster:

against all enemies, foreign and domestic

Chief Justice Burger:

that I will bear true faith and allegiance

Chief Justice Burger: to the same
(cont.)
Judge Webster: that I will bear true faith and allegiance
to the same

Chief Justice Burger: that I take this obligation freely
Judge Webster: that I take this obligation freely

Chief Justice Burger: without any mental reservation or purpose
of evasion

Judge Webster: without any mental reservation or purpose
of evasion

Chief Justice Burger: and that I will well and faithfully discharge
Judge Webster: and that I will well and faithfully discharge

Chief Justice Burger: the duties of the office
Judge Webster: the duties of the office

Chief Justice Burger: on which I am about to enter.
Judge Webster: on which I am about to enter.

Chief Justice Burger: So help me, God.
Judge Webster: So help me, God.

President Carter: Vice President Mondale, Chief Justice
Burger, Senator Eastland, Congressman
Rodino, Senators and Congressmen who have
come to visit with us, amateur Georgia
historian Griffin Bell, Director Kelley
and our new Director, Judge Webster.
As President, and as one who has learned

President Carter:
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a great deal about our Nation the last two years, three years especially, I'm deeply aware of the importance of the choice of Directorship for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I can't think of any position in our Nation's Government service that can have a more direct influence on the attitude of American people toward their own Government and in strengthening the legitimate ties among people who are interested in local, State and Federal Governments than the Directorship of the FBI. This is an agency which sets a standard for integrity and for competence, for dedication, for professionalism, for the preservation of the security of our lives and property, and for the protection of the basic rights of American people. When the FBI does a good job it makes us all legitimately proud and gives us a feeling of community of purpose and of security. Director Kelley has done a superb job in coming to this important position at a time when strong

President Carter:
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leadership, good management and absolute integrity was badly needed. And he has not disappointed us in any of those respects and Director Kelley, as President, I would like to express my deep, personal thanks to you for your tremendous contribution. Tremendous progress has already been made but we still have a need and an opportunity to make more changes and more progress. Investigative techniques, using modern technology and a closer working relationship among all law enforcement agencies and private citizens can certainly be improved. A constant reassessment of priorities, of assignment of your superb personnel in the FBI can certainly still be modified and improved. A reaffirmation of the commitment of the powers and authority of the FBI can be emphasized to protect human rights, the civil rights, the privacy of American citizens within the letter and the spirit of our Constitution and our laws. It's obvious, too, that the FBI can, through its leadership

President Carter:
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role and through its broad range of knowledge and responsibility, even improve its relationship with other Federal agencies and particularly those that are responsible for law enforcement. I think it's obvious that the new Director takes on one of the most difficult assignments in Government. He is superbly qualified. As a distinguished attorney, as a United States Attorney, as a district judge and as a circuit judge he has learned the responsibilities of the enforcement of the law, the interpretation of the law in a both theoretical and a practical way. Because of the enhanced stature of the Directorship, Griffin Bell and I had an almost unlimited capability of choosing the very top person in our country and we have been successful in doing this. I'm very proud that Judge Webster has been willing to assume this responsibility. This has been done on the basis of nonpartisanship or bipartisanship. I think it's fair to say that Judge Webster is a human being. He's

President Carter:
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a Republican which proves his fallibility so he should feel completely at home with the rest of us. We serve in an often fallible way here in Washington. I would like to assure the Chief Justice, at his request, that I will not make any more incursions into the Federal judiciary during my term of office for a Director of the FBI. Now I feel that he owes me one. I'll reserve the right to call on him in the future. The last thing I would like to say is this: On behalf of myself, the Vice President, the members of the Cabinet, all those that serve with us, and I think, in particular me, I pledge to Judge Webster my absolute and total confidence, my deepest political and personal commitment to cooperate with him as full partners in preserving the standards which have, through the ages, made our Nation so great. It is a partnership that I feel is of superb importance to our country, and I'm very proud to have a man like Judge Webster who has

President Carter:
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undertaken, to even enhance, the tremendous public record and the tremendous reputation of one of the finest organizations in Government and certainly the finest law enforcement agency in the world. Thank you very much.

Attorney General Bell:

And now remarks by retiring Director Kelley a man to whom, as the President said, we owe a great debt.

Former Director Kelley:

Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Chief Justice Burger, Senator Eastland, Congressman Rodino, Attorney General, my former boss, Mrs. Webster and our new Director. I remember a counterpart of this ceremony July 9, 1973, in that great city, Kansas City, Missouri. Since that time, it has been my great privilege to serve as Director of this wonderful organization. And, Mr. Director; with a splendid citizenry, a splendid group of associates, I commend them to you and, ladies and gentlemen, I also commend to you this new Director. He's a man of great dedication. I checked him out, in all respects. He's going to

Former Director Kelley: make it. He has all of the qualifications
(cont.) and I want him, and you, to know that
as my efforts continue they will be directed
toward making this a safer land in which
to live, a more tranquil place in which
to raise our children. And Mr. Director,
God bless you and may He protect you always.

Attorney General Bell: Now Director Webster if you will step
forward, I have a presentation to make.
It's a good thing I found this because
you wouldn't be able to get in or out
of the building.

Director Webster: I found that out.

Attorney General Bell: You found that out.

Director Webster: This is enough.

Attorney General Bell: This is, I am now presenting to the new
Director a special badge, Federal Bureau
of Investigation, Department of Justice,
which I am sure he'll treasure for the
rest of his days. I thank you for taking
this job, as I told you before I wish
you the best of everything and I pledge
to you my complete cooperation.

Director Webster:

Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Mr. Chief Justice, Senator Eastland, Congressman Rodino, Attorney General Bell, Director Kelley, Mr. Adams and other distinguished guests and I guess I can say it now, my fellow FBI Associates. My pledge to all of you, and my goal, is that ten years from now this badge will be just as bright and shiny as it is today. I'd like to express on behalf of every man and woman in the FBI our appreciation that the leaders of the three great branches of our Government would come here today, to the home of the FBI, to evidence their support and their hopes for this institution which is so important in the lives of all Americans, and we are very grateful to have all of you here. Director Kelley, as I take the baton from you, sir, and prepare to run the race that is set before me, I thank you for the lead that you have given us and I echo the words of the President in thanking you for your great and distinguished service to our

Director Webster:
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country. And now, we're ready to start anew. We've learned from the past, and we're ready to deal with the problems of the present and prepare for the tasks of the future. Let there be no doubt about it, the FBI exists to uphold the law. And my pledge to you, and all Americans, is that with due regard for the rights of all our citizens and with the highest standards of professional law enforcement as our goal, we will do the work that the American people expect of us, in the way that the constitution demands of us, so help us God. Thank you.

Attorney General Bell: That concludes the program and we will see you at the reception. Thank you very much.