

FBI Raises Pay, Offers Bonus To End N.Y. Staffing Crisis

By Michael Isikoff
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The FBI has boosted pay for its agents in New York City by 25 percent—and offered a \$20,000 bonus to agents who agree to move there—in an effort to solve a staffing crisis that has led to 300 vacancies in the bureau's largest office.

The new pay levels for New York, authorized under the recently passed Intelligence Authorization Act, are the first response to what bureau officials say has become a growing morale and staffing problem in some of its key offices across the country.

The problem has been most acute in New York, where pay scales have fallen so far behind the cost of living that agents were resigning rather than accepting transfers there, FBI spokesman Greg Jones said yesterday.

New York has long been considered the bureau's most crucial office, with special concentrations on organized crime as well as foreign counterintelligence because of the presence of the United Nations. The office has approximately 1,800 positions.

A bureau study found that so many agents had moved to the far

New York suburbs that they were unable to arrive at the scene of a crime within the required two hours. "It was impacting upon our ability to respond to emergencies," Jones said.

The entry level salary for an FBI agent is \$31,500, while journeymen—agents with seven years of experience—are paid about \$39,500, or about 50 percent less than the average local police captain. "We can't even tear away a New York police officer [to work for the FBI] because a rookie officer comes in at \$38,000 with overtime," Jones said.

The pay boost puts entry salaries in New York at \$39,375. FBI agents elsewhere will receive the standard 4.1 percent salary increase that the federal work force gets Jan. 1.

In addition, the bureau will offer the \$20,000 lump-sum bonus as a housing allowance to agents who agree to be relocated to New York and move into homes within a 50-mile radius of the city.

FBI Director William S. Sessions has directed that pay scales also be studied in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and Newark. But no determination has been made yet on increases for agents in those cities.

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