

FBI apologizes to Cong Rangel

They accused him of taking political pay off

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In what Rep. Charles Rangel termed "a historic admission of error," the FBI has apologized to the Harlem Congressman for recently releasing erroneous information about him that sullied his integrity.

The FBI went further to satisfy Rangel's quest that other innocent persons not be so smeared through the release of unfounded allegations contained in the Bureau's files. This was revealed as FBI Director William H. Webster said in a July 22 letter to Rep. Peter W. Rodino, Jr.:

"I have caused FBI disclosure procedures to be reviewed to avoid unnecessary disclosure from our files." Mr. Rodino, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and Rep. Don Edwards, chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, had discussed the change with Webster.

Mr. Rodino sent a copy of the FBI's letter to Mr. Rangel. The erroneous report was contained in documents released by the FBI to Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola who was preparing the case against former U.S. Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan.

One of the FBI documents contained a 1978 report that suggest Mr. Rangel shared in payoffs for political favors. He had vehemently denied the allegation which he termed "unfounded" and the memo a "sloppy, unprofessional work" that wasn't even "a good hatchet job."

The Congressman added during his press conference response that he would seek an FBI retraction. "On July 1, the FBI director expressed the Bureau's regret to me especially," Rangel disclosed, Monday.

About Mr. Webster's letter to Chairman Rodino, Rangel went on: "Now he



CONG. CHARLES RANGEL

has done what I think is even more important, altering the FBI procedures to provide greater protection for innocent third parties," by deleting their names from materials that the FBI releases to prosecutors.

"We build upon experience and the lesson learned in recent months is that even though we carefully follow the law in providing cooperation to a prosecutor, it is necessary to take extra precautions to avoid disclosures that on balance potentially are more harmful to an individual than essential to the record," the FBI letter stated.

"If this had been done in connection with my name in the Donovan matter," Rangel stated, "I would not have suffered the public embarrassment and harm to my reputation which has occurred because of the unsubstantiated, uncorroborated allegations against me in the material turned over to the Bronx district attorney."

He would try to see that the new procedures are carried out, Rangel said, "with the help of my good friend Chairman Peter Rodino and Don Edwards."