

Demand heavy for FBI workers

National Security a Big Factor

By TAMMY JOYNER

This is definitely not J. Edgar Hoover's FBI.

In fact, the late FBI director hardly would have recognized his agents dining on chicken fingers and fruit salad, listening to the strains of jazz and chatting up a room full of college students and 20-something professionals recently.

But these are uncertain, if not weird, times.

National security isn't so secure and the nation's on the verge of war. If raising recruits means rubbing elbows with the happy hour set in the hometown of Martin Luther King Jr., one of the FBI's most wire-tapped individuals, so be it. Tough times call for unconventional measures.

The FBI's timing couldn't be better.

While the rest of the economy continues to slip, the federal government's work force is soaring. Employment in the federal government has risen steadily during the past 18 months as many private companies were laying off workers. The number of federal government jobs nationwide has grown by 24,000 since January 2001, after a decade of decline.

There are about 2.6 million employees working for the federal government now.

But the government faces a major crunch.

More than a third of the federal government's work force will be eligible for retirement in the next five years, according to the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit group in Washington. And the partnership estimates that 250,000 openings will be related to Homeland Security needs.

In the near term, federal hiring is likely to continue as the country prepares for war, beefs up security and undergoes the biggest government reorganization in 55 years. Demand for airport screeners, linguists, border patrol agents and FBI workers of all stripes is big.

"The federal government's looking for a lot of front-line [security] workers like FBI agents and support staff," said Michael Wald, Atlanta-based regional economist for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Far cry from old days

Renewed patriotism, faltering confidence in the economy and corporate America has also made government jobs and G-men (and women) hot.

"It's one of the more respected agencies," said Steven Kern, a 29-year-old financial planning and analysis manager. He was among three dozen people who attended the mixer.

"With the economy still uncertain and the government beefing up their work force, I wanted to come out and see what it's all about," Kern said. "I actually think pretty highly of them."

That's a far cry from a generation ago when FBI recruiters were jeered on many college campuses and weren't too welcome in the black community, either. Most of the people attending the mixer were too young to remember Hoover's FBI. But their parents probably can recall an agency that was ruled by steel-fisted bureaucracy and a system that wasn't above scare tactics to squash groups or individuals perceived to be a threat.

"There were abuses," Special Agent C.W. Saari concedes. "But we're a different organization now."

Saari cited the recent mixer as an example of how the bureau is trying to reach out to communities.

"I've never seen something like this," he said. The 28-year veteran is based in Atlanta and recruits for the bureau.

Brainchild of students

The mixer was the brainchild of Clark Atlanta University international marketing students. The school was approached by a California consulting firm, Edventure Partners, on behalf of the FBI. The Clark Atlanta students decided on an after-hours social after a focus group session revealed that people see the 94-year-old bureau as "corrupt" and "uptight."

"We wanted to do something in a more relaxed environment," said Kenya Croom, a senior marketing major at Clark Atlanta and one of the coordinators of the FBI mixer. The marketing class hopes to draw about 20 possible applicants for the

bureau.

"We really need to get minorities involved in the FBI and law enforcement overall," said Alex Hill, a special agent who mingled with prospects at the mixer. Hill, a six-year veteran of the bureau, works in the division that investigates gangs.

For those who remember the FBI's shadowy past, the recent schmooze fest at Sylvia's seems a bit ironic.

"It's a long way from J. Edgar Hoover, I suppose," says Les Hough, director of the Center for the Workplace at Georgia State University. "I assume it's part of an overall effort to connect, if you wish, more closely with the local community ... and reverse [its past], at least in terms of perception."

The bureau is still battling some internal problems. It has been hit with several racial bias lawsuits over the years. The most recent involves a group of FBI agents in New York, the bureau's largest field office. Five agents - four blacks and one Hispanic - are suing the Justice Department for what they say are

A GLOBAL WORK FORCE

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was founded in 1908. It has 27,000 employees and 56 field offices. About 420 FBI employees are in Georgia. Atlanta is the 12th largest FBI field office. Here's a look at the federal bureau's global work force as of Nov. 1:

► **Special agents:** 11,541 (18.1 percent are women)

► **Minority agents:** 1,886

Black male agents: 512

Black female agents: 123

► **Median age:** 30 years and 6 months

► **Education:** More than 60 percent have advanced degree such as masters, law or Ph.D.

► **Support staff*:** 15,633

67.6 percent are women.

23.4 percent are minority

18.1 percent are black

* Support staff includes 400 jobs ranging from auto mechanics to analysts to DNA scientists.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

entrenched patterns of racial harassment. The suit also alleges the agents ran into roadblocks during their investigation of the World Trade Center attack.

Further, the number of black female agents in the entire bureau could have met comfortably at Sylvia's. In fact, those 123 agents gather at someone's home once a year to network, one of the female agents attending the mixer said. The bureau is trying to create a more diverse and equitable environment. It has a merit-based program that also administers objective management tests to all supervisors and senior executives at the FBI, Saari said.

Massive adjustment

The FBI is symbolic of what's going on

throughout the federal government: massive adjustment.

The new Homeland Security Department will mean big changes for the slow-moving bureaucracy. President Bush has also caught flak for his plan to outsource hundreds of thousands of jobs, and that could ultimately mean a smaller federal government work force.

Two trends - federalization of airport screeners and the Bush outsourcing plan - make the federal government's ultimate size unclear, Wald said.

For now, the federal government can expect to capitalize on American patriotism and disenchantment with corporate scandals. The Partnership for Public Service has a national campaign to bring

the prospects of working for the federal government back to college campuses. The non-profit group is now working with 380 schools nationwide, including more than a dozen Georgia schools.

"These days young people are looking to make a difference rather than make a dollar," said Bethany Young Hardy, a representative of the Partnership for Public Service, the nonprofit group. "We're hopeful that young people realize there's more ways to make a difference through federal service."

As for the FBI?

"We just don't focus on the law enforcement Rambo-types. We're interested in thinkers who have a positive-record and solid interpersonal skills," says Saari.

LARGE RETIREMENT NUMBERS CREATE OPENINGS

The federal government is expected to lose many workers to retirement in the next five years, creating major job openings, according to the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit group in Washington. Nearly 85 percent of federal government jobs are outside of Washington. Here's a sample of some of the current job openings and salary ranges for some:

► **Air traffic control specialist** with the U.S. Department of Transportation (nationwide - including Atlanta)

► **Cartographic technician** (map maker) with the U.S. Army (nationwide)

► **School age program coordinator** with the U.S. Department of the Air Force (nationwide)

► **Tax examiner** with the U.S. Department of Treasury (Internal Revenue Service) in Chamblee - \$22,310 to \$28,988 a year

► **Meteorologist** with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Peachtree City - \$37,807 to \$49,145 a year

► **Behavioral scientist** with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta) - \$77,000 to \$100,000 a year

► **Border patrol agent**, Department of Justice, Immigration & Naturalization Service, (nationwide) - \$30,466 to \$37,043 a year

Source: Partnership for Public Service and www.usajobs.opm.gov

WHERE THE JOBS ARE

The FBI hired 923 agents nationwide last year. The bureau is looking to hire more than 800 agents by Sept. 30, 2003. It also has other job openings:

SPECIAL AGENTS

► **Job/requirement:** Must be at least 23 and not more than 37 years old by the time they're sworn in. They must have at least a bachelor's degree and three years of work experience. Work experience may be waived if they are fluent in a foreign language the bureau needs and the person can pass the FBI language test. It could also be waived if the person has a computer science or law degree.

Must do 16 weeks of training at Quantico, Va .

► **Salary range:** Agents earn about \$43,700 a year. Once they graduate from the academy, they would earn about \$53,700 a year in Georgia and can go to \$68,500 a year after three years. After five years, they could earn about \$81,500 a year.

INTELLIGENCE RESEARCH SPECIALIST

► **Job/requirement:** Provides support to counterintelligence, counterterrorism, organized crime and general criminal missions of the FBI. Duties include preparing strategic and operational analyses; espionage case studies; operational link analyses and threat assessments that are distrib-

uted within the FBI, law enforcement and U.S. intelligence community.

► **Salary range:** \$31,397-\$86,095 a year.

LANGUAGE SPECIALIST

► **Job/requirement:** Translates a wide variety of oral and written material from a specific foreign language into English. Work is primarily document-to-document or audio-to-document. Case work involves organized crime, white-collar crime, public corruption, financial crimes, terrorism, counterespionage, fugitive and drug-trafficking matters.

► **Salary range:** \$24,200-\$44,300 a year.

Source: FBI