

Artem Kharisov

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Why The F.B.I. Couldn't Catch Dan Cooper

Thieves and Robin Hood figures will always be regarded as brave and daring individuals, but the ones who attract the most publicity from mankind are the ones that do not get caught. The tale of D.B. Cooper and his infamous plane hijacking has been a story that has reached every corner of the world, and yet, if he were discovered, the story would have blown with the wind only to be forgotten as an incident, rather than remembered as mystery. The Federal Investigation Bureau took this case as a top-priority mission as it involved federal hijacking. It is to my belief that the F.B.I., and other government or state agencies, misplaced their efforts during the golden years of being able to solve the case due to the sheer amount of volume of information that they received, as well as distributed, whether or not it ended up being helpful or harmful to the investigation as a whole.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has an immense collection of files about the Northwest Hijacking, or what they refer to simply as Norjak. There are over 20,000 pages of files that are separated into 56 separate parts. Each part contains over 300 pages per collection, sometimes a thousand. Every single part as well has redacted pages, messages, and facts, of which a major majority are [b6], [b7c], and [b7d]. Almost

all the files preceding the 5th part contain the description and recounts of the actual incident itself. The rest of the parts, of course, contain information which has to do with the description and/or tips of possible suspects that the F.B.I. chose to not put out into the public media for the prevention of those suspects being targeted.

With there being over 20,000 pages in the D.B. Cooper files, the archives are structured in the way that the initial case is presented, being described in the earlier numbered parts, and then, as stated above, a massive collaboration of archives that contains possible leads to solving the mystery. I will analyze the beginning of the archives to understand if the F.B.I. had enough of a story on the actual event to work with, and I will also use the following archives to further reiterate my point that the F.B.I. was not able to conduct their investigation properly due to their mismanagement of questions and leads. I will interpret the later archives on an individual story basis, of which would include looking at possible suspects that were brought up to the F.B.I. and as to why they dismissed them. This would give me the greatest chance to discover their downfall in this investigation, whether it be they were led astray or not given enough information.

To start off, I would like to mention that D.B. Cooper is not a real name, but a pseudonym that was created by media miscommunication. A reporter by the name of James Long can be directly blamed for this name change as he wanted to rush out the story, and accidentally misinformed the public of a possible suspect named D.B. Cooper, not the actual ticket.¹ This link between how the media handled the information

¹ Bragg, Lynn E, Myths and Mysteries of Washington (Guilford, Connecticut: Globe Pequot, 2005) p.2

that the Bureau was providing is important to keep in mind during the story and will be briefly discussed later on as well.

The story begins on November 24, 1971, the day before Thanksgiving, at Portland International Airport. There was a middle-aged man that purchased a one-way ticket on Flight 305, which was a half hour trip to Seattle. The man boarded the plane, ordered alcoholic drinks and soda, and was presumed by many on the flight as a quiet passenger.² Unbeknownst to them, this calm passenger showed one of the flight attendants a handwritten note which stated that he had an explosive. He showed the flight attendant the bomb and then demanded that he wanted \$200,000, four parachutes, and a fuel truck to refuel the plane after landing.³ The flight attendant notified the captain, who in turn notified higher authorities on the matter.

The President of the Northwest Orient, a subdivision of Northwest Airlines, authorized the ransom payment, and the airplane ended up circling around Puget Sound for two hours.⁴ While circling, the crew was ordered to fully meet the demands of Dan Cooper. All the witnesses on the plane have been noted in saying that Dan Cooper did not follow hijacker stereotypes, in the sense that he was calm, nice, and collective, and even ordered another bourbon and soda before paying his tab off. Cooper even requested that the passengers have meals when they get down to Seattle.² Having been given plenty of time to organize forces and the ransoms requested, Cooper

² Olson, James S, Historical Dictionary of the 1970's (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999) p. 107

³ Himmelsbach, Ralph P.; Worcester, Thomas K. Norjak: The Investigation of D. B. Cooper. (West Linn, Oregon, 1986)

⁴ Gray, Geoffrey "Unmasking D.B. Cooper" (New York Magazine October 21, 2007)

released all passengers on the plane except for the cockpit crew upon being granted the ransom.⁵

When aboard the airplane with just himself and the cockpit crew, Dan Cooper laid out a flight plan that was due South East on a course to Mexico City. The interesting thing was that Dan specifically requested that the aircraft travel the minimum velocity possible to avoid stalling, and for the landing gear and aft airstair to be deployed. The cockpit crew rejected this plan and said that the altitude he wanted to fly at was too high for this aircraft with those guidelines in mind to reach Mexico.

They together formed a plan to land in Nevada to refuel. While in the airspace between Nevada and Seattle, Dan Cooper opened the aft airstair, which he agreed with the pilots on not opening until airborne and jumped out of it. Upon the landing of the airplane in Reno Airport, armed agents, troopers, and other personnel were waiting to capture the hijacker. Unknowingly to them at the time, Dan Cooper had jumped out of the airstair and would then never be apprehended, even to this day.

After taking off for Mexico City, the pilots told D.B. Cooper that they did not have enough fuel to make it all the way there. It was in this situation that the hijacker chose to dive out at a random time and location which can only be approximated using the planes navigational controls and the memory of the oscillation of noise at exactly 8:12pm the pilots heard during what could have been D.B. Cooper jumping out of the plane.⁴

⁵ Report, 08/22/1980, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 07 of 56, page 12, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2007%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/5/2021

Now that we are done with the theatrical summary of the hijacking, it is important to look at how the Bureau documented this. D.B. Cooper Part 8 of 46 is one of the first archives available on the vault for the description of the event itself that I will be looking at closely. It states that on the 24th of November, 1971, a Seattle Office telephonically advised the Bureau that a passenger had demanded \$200,000 dollars, 2 sets of parachutes, and was threatening he would bring down flight #305, a Northwest Airlines Boeing 727, with a bomb if the demands were not meant. The report goes on to give the first description of the hijacker; "6' 1", 175 pounds, black hair, fifty years old".⁶

The airplane circled around the Seattle-Tacoma Airport, waiting for the government institutions to gather the hijackers' request. The hijacker allowed everyone to get off board, except for the main cockpit crew. After refueling and leaving for his destination in Mexico, the cockpit crew informed D.B. Cooper that they would not be able to make it there without stopping for fuel in Reno, Nevada. It was on this journey that Cooper, at an unknown time, jumped out of the plane with the money and the parachutes, never to be found again.⁶

Immediately following this entry, there are reports that are starting to be filed that were given by tips. For example, on page 9 of D.B. Cooper Part 8, it is stated that 4 days after the hijacking, a person phoned from California saying that they recognized the man as a sports parachutist and recalled that they had not seen the man for quite some time.⁷ This was just the beginning to the truckload of tips that the F.B.I. was about to receive from the general public, many of which could not amount to any useful information unfortunately. An example of this would be page 186 of the same document,

⁶ Report, 11/24/1971, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 08 of 56, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2008%20of%2056/view>

⁷ Ibid, page 9.

which gives information about a tip on the 18th of July, 1985, already 14 years after the hijacking. The tip states that a man the tipper talked to told him that he was D.B. Cooper, the same man that the tipper saw a movie about. He then went on to describe the glasses and the jacket that D.B. Cooper wore during the hijacking. It is clear to see through looking at some of the 20,000 pages of the report, that there is just a complete mess surrounding the possible tips for this case. A major majority of them are people either claiming to be, to know, or to have known the mystery man that everyone was looking for. This would clearly be a problem in identifying the possible suspect if everyone had a mystical feeling towards him. This would create a feeling within society itself, that almost everything going on could be related to the case itself. This is similar to people being paranoid, but in the sense that every person somewhat involved in the case, whether they were a passenger at the airport, or even the special agent in charge of the case, could be lead to believe that they would be able to solve the case if they trusted their guts in finding evidence.

For example, there are instances where this sort of thinking completely led the F.B.I. astray and diverted their one precious resource: manpower. For example, on page 2 to 5 on D.B. Cooper Part 8, it is stated that an individual came forward to the Bureau to inform them that he had overheard a conversation from a redacted individual between a redacted reporter.

It is stated that in this conversation, the said reporter asked about the possibility of jumping out of a 727 and being able to survive. This information was also topped with the two talking about the reporter's movie that he wanted to be working on, which involved throwing things out of a plane. This all seemed interesting at the time,

especially when the production company the reporter presumably worked with was not discovered, however it was power that was not well placed. For example, at the end of the file on the reporter and the informant, the F.B.I. writes “Suggest possibility that Los Angeles assemble a list of movie companies for display to [redacted]”.⁸ This is an instance where the F.B.I. took a tip too seriously, as they did not find any useful information in hunting for the production company name of a movie that had the possibility of connecting itself to the famed hijacker.

While talking about the F.B.I. and its accidents with the investigation, I think it is also worth noting that the media outlets can be equally guilty in creating an atmosphere that would be negative towards solving the mystery. It is important to note that media outlets do not disassociate themselves from the F.B.I. in an academic and philosophical way. The media sources would be the middleman, carrying out information given to them by the Bureau and putting it on aesthetic display for the countries population to be able to read and enjoy. The main problem with this was that the F.B.I. was at times a little too aggressive in pushing out information. For example, a news report that was documented in D.B. Cooper Part 05 of 56 on November 28, presumably in the 1970’s but the F.B.I. vault has clipped off the date for the article, goes to show how much information the Bureau actually released to the public.⁹

The F.B.I. essentially released the lists of the serial numbers that were on the 20 dollars bills that were ransomed out to D.B. Cooper. This created negative pressure on the case, as stated by the title of the article, “Cooper Bill List Creates ‘Unusual Interest’

⁸ Ibid, page 2-5.

⁹ Report, 11/28/19XX, “D.B. Cooper,” D.B. Cooper, Part 05 of 56, page 2, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2005%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/16/2021

in \$20s". The only logical outcome from this is that every person is suddenly looking at their money in their wallet and checking the circulating cash and every grocery store in America. This would obviously prove useful to D.B. Cooper, as if he indeed survived, he would have known that he would need to take a backdoor method into changing the ransom money into something useable. The article also stated that people began to come forth and exchange what is described as "fairly large amounts of money" for 20-dollar bills hoping that they would become lucky enough to have one of the ransomed bills in their prized possession.¹⁰

To take this even further, we can examine D.B. Cooper Part 06 of 56, which shows us some more newspaper articles that were taken from around the time the serial numbers were released. The Oregon Journal once again can be blamed for this one, as it was aggressive in its position to take advantage of a story to tell. The title of the article is "Winner of D.B. Cooper \$20 Bill Hunt get \$1000."¹¹ This is completely detrimental to society and not just the actual case itself. The news and media agencies are taking the search for the hijacker and turning it into a game that involves a cash prize at the end. This further proves the point that was made earlier when people were exchanging their savings to hopefully land on the 20 dollar bill that could turn out a huge payout for them. This is clearly not healthy for the economical status of the country, even if it is localized in some areas.

Further down on Part 05 of 56 where the lists of serial numbers were located on the Bureau Vault file, we can see an interview in an unnamed and weirdly scanned

¹⁰ Ibid, page 1.

¹¹ Report, 11/07/1973, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 06 of 56, page 7, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2006%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/17/2021

newspaper article.¹² However, the contents of this article are spectacular in pointing out how much information the F.B.I. ‘accidentally’ gave away. The interview is being conducted in a standard manner, and the newspaper is presenting to its audience that it has an anonymous reporter talking to the real D.B. Cooper on a record tape some time after the hijacking. The interesting thing in this interview is that it is a full regurgitation of the facts that were given by the Bureau. For example, the anonymous reporter asks Cooper about every single detail as it transpired, and Cooper is able to retell it the entire story, even making a mock that if the “FBI was going to make a movie, it would have been at Sea-Tac”. The Cooper in the newspaper begins to present information such as praying that they didn’t call his bluff with the bomb, flashing his bomb twice in the cockpit, and describing the situation with the flight plan to Mexico in great detail.

“I want the flaps at 15 percent and the gear down, I also want the ventral staircase down when you take off”, spoke Cooper into the tape recorder. This type of detail would be present in some individuals attempting to make a joke after watching a documentary or special on the D.B. Cooper series in which the F.B.I. disclosed all these minute details. It is to my belief that when everyone knows the minute details about a story, that is when it becomes incredibly difficult to solve in the sense that everyone knows exactly what happened. According to the newspaper interview, Cooper was also able to figure out that someone had messed with the parachutes. “Somebody was playing games there. The backpack harness did not have the necessary D-rings for attaching to chestpacks....to hell with it, I’d have to jump without a reserve.” This type of detailed information is sure to have confused many readers into believing that that was

¹² Report, 11/28/19XX, “D.B. Cooper,” D.B. Cooper, Part 05 of 56, page 3-6, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2005%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/15/2021

the actual hijacker. The interview even mentions the extra chute that Cooper had used to strapping the cash in, which was a very unorthodox thing to do in that situation.

This newspaper article makes it seem like they already have the real D.B. Cooper giving the interview, which could also negatively impact the case. The population might be compelled to believe that the real D.B. Cooper will always outsmart the F.B.I., and that there is not any reason to believe in the workforce of the Bureau, let alone submit any more helpful tips to them. This interview is incredibly dangerous because it also inspires people to do the same thing, and as history tells there have been many repeats of individuals wanting to be just like their idol and create hijacks of their own. One of the main problems that we can see is primarily what D.B. Cooper Part 04 of 56 consists of; different news outlets providing interviews and their versions of “scoops” .¹³

Exploring a vast multitude of F.B.I. files from the vault which will further increases our investigation of whether the F.B.I. was not able to solve the case due to the sheer amount of volume of tips and information received from the public during that time will be tremendously helpful. For example, the file such as page 17,811 of D.B. Cooper Part 44 of 56, which contains a letter from a person from a spiritual healing center, only labeled publicly by their choice of entrepreneurial slogans at the top of the letter and their gender at the top, to the correspondence of Governor Dixie Lee Ray on March 24, 1980. This psychic claimed that she had predicted the Governor winning reelection, and as such predicts that she can feel and knows how to solve the D.B. Cooper case. There was a formal response that was warranted from several officials such as Colonel R. W.

¹³ Report, 02/20/72, “D.B. Cooper,” D.B. Cooper, Part 04 of 56, page 1,216, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2010%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/5/2021

Landon, Chief of Washington State Patrol for the psychic's inquiry.¹⁴ I believe that responding to this was a waste of efforts on behalf of the Bureau.

There were plenty of tips that were submitted to the Bureau that did not get the responses that they deserved. For example, on page 6,297 of D.B. Cooper Part 21 of 56, we are presented with a report that contains information about a note that someone found in a pay booth that is relevant to the case. The informant stated that the note "appeared to him to be instructions regarding hijacking an aircraft...mentions the name D.B. Cooper."¹⁵ There is some hand written writing at the bottom of the page that has the word "Lead" with a checkmark next to it. However, I have not been able to find any other information regarding this lead in any of the files. This is interesting because this report was taken on February 2, 1972, almost 4 months after the hijacking itself. It is very interesting that this lead was not archived, but it sounds like it could be a very important and vital part of the investigation that was left out from the public's view.

There are many problems that can occur within the systems itself that the people have put in place. For example, there are people that might have the power or social status to be able to dismiss cases based on their own viewpoint. To explore this, we will be looking at files such as D.B. Cooper Part 10 of 56, specifically page 1,216. This file provides us with evidence that during investigations that are being conducted at the state level. Reports such as the one conducted by Jerry G. Wilson of the Douglas

¹⁴ Report, 03/26/1980, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 44 of 56, page 17,811, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/d.b.-cooper-part-44-of-55/view>; last viewed 3/5/2021

¹⁵ Report, 02/02/1972, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 21 of 56, page 6,297, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/d.b.-cooper-part-44-of-55/view>; last viewed 3/17/2021

County Sheriff's Office, stated that "He does not believe that [redacted] is identical with D.B. Cooper...however if the F.B.I. is not convinced..."¹⁶

These types of files lead me to believe that there were many reports of individuals being taken, but some of them might have been much more important than others. For example, in this exact case and file, there could be a possibility that the hunch of the Sheriff or whoever was running the investigation in its respective area was given too much authority in denying any connection from their suspect to the crime. I feel as though in files like this I will be able to find individuals that could have very well been D.B. Cooper caught red handed, however were dismissed simply due to the word of the investigator being convincing enough for the F.B.I. to not act on it with intensity and put the information in the pile that they deemed unhelpful.

The F.B.I. is also incredibly guilty in sabotaging their own chances of ever being able to find the subject. They have misplaced serious evidence and essentially took the wrong steps at the wrong time to being able to solve the case. In a Wall Street Journal article, we can clearly see how the F.B.I. essentially lost their only chance of being able to ever have any conclusive DNA evidence that would have convicted any suspects that they would have had or have in the future, but considering this case is over 50 years, the real Dan Cooper might have passed away due to natural causes. The article opens up with stating how there have been previous attempts that did not yield anything of quality, such as guitar straps from a woman who said she overheard her uncle confessing to the hijacking when she was 8 years old. The guitar strings did not manage to have any fingerprints on them that could be used as an identifying piece of

¹⁶ Report, 04/14/76, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 10 of 56, page 1,216, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2010%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/5/2021

evidence.¹⁷ However, this is not a blunder of the Bureau. A true blunder of the Bureau would be something along the lines of losing evidence that could jeopardize even being able to truly convict a suspect of the hijacking.

The F.B.I. misplaced eight filter-tipped Raleigh cigarette butts that had D.B. Cooper's DNA on it in 2007. What had happened was Bureau agents found the butts near 18E, which was Cooper's seat on the airplane itself. They sent these butts off to the F.B.I. lab that they had in Quantico.¹⁸ Almost mysteriously, after Geoffrey Gray, the author of *The Curse of D.B. Cooper; From Staking Out Skydivers to Sniffing Out a Suspiciously Big Tipper*, as well as the author of the *Wall Street Journal* article, started on his journey of collecting information, he stumbled across something of value. Geoffrey stated that he had gotten a response from Ayn Dietrich, which was the media rep for the F.B.I.'s Seattle Office. She told him that they "think they are somewhere in Las Vegas."¹⁹ He was in contact with former case agent Larry Carr, who has worked extensively on Norjack.

Larry Carr had stated that a 'Cooper Curse' definitely exists. The figurative curse is the reason why this case went unsolved. There were countless leads that would essentially end up in non-relevant findings that could not be applied to solving the case directly. When Geoffrey contacted Carr about being able to have physical evidence re-examined, it appears that the cigarette butts disappeared altogether. The only logical assumption to make is that they were indeed lost in transit, or they were stolen on

¹⁷ Gray, Geoffrey. 2011. "The Curse of D.B. Cooper; from Staking Out Skydivers to Sniffing Out a Suspiciously Big Tipper--Four Decades of Frustration." *Wall Street Journal* (Online), Aug 06, 2011. <https://search-proquestcom.oca.ucsc.edu/newspapers/curse-d-b-cooper-staking-out-skydivers-sniffing/docview/881496029/se2?accountid=14523>.

¹⁸ Gray, Geoffrey. 2012. "Skyjack: The Hunt for D.B. Cooper". *Broadway Paperbacks*, 2012.

¹⁹ Gray, Geoffrey. 2011. "D.B. Cooper: FBI Lost Key Evidence That Could Identify Thief." *The Daily Beast*, August 3, 2011. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/db-cooper-fbi-lost-key-evidence-that-could-identify-thief>.

purpose. This is one of the main points that I am slamming the Bureau for, as they grossly lost pieces of evidence that were crucial to the case. The interesting thing is the Cooper Curse that Carr was talking about earlier. It seems as though every time they have had or have a serious lead in the case, there is something standing in the way of them from being able to solve it, whether the Bureau placed the obstacle there themselves or not.

Some credit can also be attributed to Dan Cooper himself. Dan Cooper must have been trained in some sort of military background, as the F.B.I. had suspected.²⁰ This would mean that tactics not possible to ordinary civilians could have very well been in play during this hijacking. For example, from the Wall Street Journal article again that was written by Geoffrey Gray, he states that the Curse began the night of the hijacking. Dan Cooper was well versed enough in flight capabilities of the military aircrafts when he managed to perfectly avoid the Air Force Fighter jets by staying out of their radars. This was possible because Dan Cooper had asked the pilots to fly at around 200 miles per hour, which was way too slow for the jets and they would fly right past the plane.

Another thing that hindered the F.B.I. in being able to solve this case was nature itself. Based on the calculations and everything observed, the Bureau let a full force investigation into the 800 square miles of the Cascade Foothills.¹⁵ This could have been all in vain if the initial calculation or approximation of Dan Cooper's landing was miscalculated. The problem with having searches around certain regions is the weather factor as well. They did not search the area thoroughly enough before the snowfall, which made them have to wait until the next time when it was feasible. The F.B.I. did not

²⁰ Report, 01/05/82, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 07 of 56, page 11, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20/D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2007%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/15/2021

use its evidence that it had on hand from the flight itself and relied on being able to catch the hijacker with the cash red handed. I believe this was one of the reasons that they were not able to find Dan Cooper's location. They were too preoccupied with attempting to find the man and where he landed, rather than taking care of the evidence that they already had.²¹

It is interesting to note the many fallacies that can be brought up due to the F.B.I. mismanaging their resources and what to do with them. For example, there was no paperwork that I was able to find that showed any of the actual scientific analysis done on the cigarette butts. It seems as though they have just disappeared completely.

Another problem that arises would be how the F.B.I. managed the clip on tie that Dan Cooper was wearing. If he was indeed wearing this tie, then circumstantial evidence could have been recovered from it that would have led to the DNA analysis of Dan Cooper. The clip on tie could have proved just as much as the cigarette butts did, but once again the F.B.I. was not able to deliver on what it promised. The Clip on tie was in the evidence locker at Seattle for almost 4 full days after the hijacking had been committed. It has been also noted that recently, Citizen Sleuth, a team of scientists that are devoted to solving this mystery have started a website that is under the domain <https://citizensleuths.com/>. This team has made discoveries that are making people today question why the F.B.I. was not able to discover the things they did or why they at least have not picked up where they have left off.²²

²¹ Report, 12/06/71, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 14 of 56, page 3,301, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2014%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/16/2021

²² "Citizen Sleuths Analyze the D.B. Cooper Case." Home - Citizen Sleuths. Accessed March 17, 2021. <https://citizensleuths.com/>.

Citizen Sleuths, which thank once again Special Agent Larry Carr especially for overseeing the Bureaus cooperation with the team, have made the discovery that there was microscopic analysis of the tie that have been taken. These analysis provide the look at the particles that were present on the tie. It is very interesting to note that they found very rare metals, particularly titanium, in their pure form, which would have been very hard to find in the 1970's unless the person was working at a metal working factory. This would have been very good evidence for them to use during the 1970's, however, they did not feel the need to use the tie to its full advantages. Another real addition and mystery to the Cooper Curse would be how during the writing of D.B. Cooper, the Real McCoy, by Bernie Rhodes and Russell P. Calame, the main author, Bernie Rhodes, interviewed and asked a major number of people from the one of the evidence retrieval offices in Reno, Nevada, and none of them could even recall the tie when they were questioned in 1985.²³

There is another set of blunders that can be found after digging around through some more of the F.B.I. vault folders. The Bureau seems to be always so certain in making the final decision, such as the one conducted by Jerry G. Wilson of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, which was stated earlier. It is incredibly dangerous for people that have authority in their organization to be providing information that is terminal in nature. For example, page 14 of D.B. Cooper Part 07 of 56 presents not one, but two instances of Special Agents using their authoritative power to strike down possible leads, simply due to their understanding.²⁴ The report goes on to describe a charter ship

²³ Rhodes, Bernie, and Russell P. Calame. D.B. Cooper, the Real McCoy. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991.

²⁴ Report, 04/14/76, "D.B. Cooper," D.B. Cooper, Part 07 of 56, page 14, <https://vault.fbi.gov/D-BCooper%20D.B.%20Cooper%20Part%2007%20of%2056/view>; last viewed 3/15/2021

captain that was sailing near the area of the Columbia River that could very well have related to the final whereabouts of Cooper. The captain was going about his regular business, and then he noticed that there was an “olive-drab fabric” that might have been apart of D.B. Cooper’s parachute. The captain stated that he had seen parachutes before, and that he could recognize the material on the parachute was silk, which is what most parachutes at the time were made with. The captain mailed photos of the parachute and its cord to the F.B.I., and what occurred next could only be described in a movie scene. Dorwin Schreuder of the Bureau’s Portland Office looked at the black and white pictures of the cord along with some of his other agents, and together they came to the conclusion that this has ‘nothing to do’ with the parachutes that D.B. Cooper jumped from.

This is grossly misusing power as it would have been nearly impossible for the F.B.I., at least by our terms and notions today, to conclusively deduct that something could not have been helpful to the investigation simply by looking at black and white pictures of it. They wouldn’t even be able to confirm that the color was correct. On top of this, their official response was that although the parachute photographed had matched one of the parachutes given to Cooper, it was “not one that he took with him”.²⁵ These are serious conclusions drawn from the same agent that described in his report “This item, if it’s the olive-wood color you describe...”. This special agent is basing his interpretation of the evidence in question based on the color of the object described to him by the provider, not his own interpretation. The black and white aspect of the photo’s could very well have negatively affected this key component to solving the case.

²⁵ Ibid, 13.

The second part of the blunder that was mentioned earlier occurred in the same report as well! It would seem the F.B.I. has shamelessly had to catalog all of their failures in their own reports as well. On the very next page of the same document, we are introduced to information about the finding of some of the ransom money near the Columbia River, in Vancouver. The story starts on August 6, 1980 and was described in the report as an 8-year-old boy playing in the sand and mud banks of the river during a picnic with his family. Suddenly, he discovered 'soggy and battered fragments of several thousand dollars in \$20 bills' which contained and matched the exact serial numbers from the hijacking ransom that was paid out.²⁶ Suddenly there was a hoard of special agents and scientists from the Bureau, all sniffing out what they could possibly find. However, it states that F.B.I. Agent Paul Hudson said that he 'ruled out the possibility' that it could have been buried along the river near Vancouver.²² This is directly showing an error that was accounted for and discovered to be untrue by the Bureau. This is one of the strongest areas that show how the F.B.I. made errors in its judgment towards possibilities or evidence, that could have been crucial to solving the case when it was able to be solved.

It is also worth noting on a completely different note that this could have been near the time that MK Ultra was in effect, as this would have definitely affected some of the performance of the field agents. This would mean that the government in itself, as well as the F.B.I., poorly and unluckily calculated the timing of their secret operation to trick people into inducing mind altering substances such as LSD that could have completely left a field agent stunned and forgetful of what they were supposed to report.

All of these incidents that have been mentioned in the document thus far can be combined into providing a strong example of what it was like to work for the F.B.I. during the time of the golden years of the case. There were definitely sectors of the government or even the Bureau itself that could have played part. This isn't even mentioning how almost 7 months after this incident, the Watergate Scandal happened and completely crushed people's trust in the government. It is impossible to say that there could not have been a minor connection in the mistrust and backstabbing that was present in the Watergate scandal that could have seeped over into the solving of this case. There is also the point of being able to say that this investigation as a whole was not able to be successful due to the power and staff transitions that were brought upon by the Watergate Scandal. The early 1970's, were very clearly a mess for the F.B.I., and I do not believe that they were in the proper place to be able to solve a case like this.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was clearly not ready to be able to solve the mysterious case of D.B. Cooper. There have been a lot of things that stand and have stood in their way, including themselves. I believe that the case of D.B. Cooper was unsolved and will remain unsolved due to the Bureau's poor management of resources, tips, and searches that they were not able to perform. The F.B.I. should have paid more attention to tips that were presented to them that included very key details, they should not have given free reign to the newspapers to be able to make contests out of finding the suspected hijacker, and lastly they should have not relied on the information from single sources, such as special agents themselves or department heads from different states.

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