

# FBI agents protest clemency request

*A march at the White House urges no mercy for Leonard Peltier, convicted of killing two agents in 1975*

By **CHRISTOPHER NEWTON**  
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WASHINGTON — Marching two-by-two and wearing blue memorial ribbons, hundreds of FBI agents staged an unprecedented demonstration at the White House on Friday, protesting any presidential clemency for a Native American activist convicted of killing two FBI agents in 1975.

The emotional procession of 500 current and former FBI employees and family members marched in a loop around the White House, led by two agents carrying a banner with the red-lettered slogan "Never Forget." A few agents blinked back tears as they displayed pictures of their slain colleagues, agents Ron Williams and Jack Coler.

The agents hauled a bulky petition for President Clinton signed by 8,000 current and former agents protesting any easing of punish-



TING-LI WANG/NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

**FBI agent Eddie Woods of Cincinnati, flanked by portraits of Jack Coler (left) and Ronald Williams, protests in Washington, D.C., on Friday. Agents Coler and Williams were killed in 1975.**

ment for Leonard Peltier, 56, who is serving two consecutive life sentences in the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kan.

Secret Service agents refused to take the petition, however, telling their fellow federal officers that White House security forbids ac-

ceptance of any documents or packages. The agents planned to mail it.

"There are situations in which mercy is warranted, but clearly what this man has done puts him outside of the reach of any presidential pardon," said John Sennett,

a New York-based agent and president of the FBI Agents Association, which has about 9,000 active and 1,000 retired members.

The protest supported FBI Director Louis Freeh's recommendation to Clinton not to give Peltier clemency, saying such an act would "signal disrespect" for law enforcement.

Clinton has said that he would review pending requests for executive clemency, including Peltier's, before he leaves office in January.

"I know it's very important to a lot of people, maybe on both sides of the issue," Clinton said regarding the Peltier case in November. "And I think I owe it to them to give it an honest look-see."

Agents Williams and Coler were killed June 26, 1975, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota as they were searching for robbery suspects, according to FBI officials. Both were shot in the head at point-blank range after they were injured. The bodies were left on a dirt road.

Peltier was charged with taking part in the slayings, but whether he fired the shots was never proved.