Conroy asks wide probe of police spying

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EDWARD T. CONROY
. . . moves for investigation

Annapolis—The chairman of the Senate committee that is examining allegations of city police spying on politicians, reporters, clergymen and others not engaged in criminal activity said yesterday he will press for a full-scale legislative investigation of the matter.

Senator Edward T. Conroy (D., Prince Georges) said at a press conference that he will request subpoena power to require the testimony of witnesses and the delivery of documents, tapes and other necessary evidence. He predicted the hearings would last through most of the 90-day session.

Mr. Conroy's Constitutional and Public Law Committee, which heard testimony on police surveillance activities Tuesday, is expected to approve a resolution calling for the investigation when it meets again next Tuesday.

Under a never before used 1968 law, either house of the General Assembly can establish an "investigating committee" by passing a resolution stating the committee's size, purpose and duration.

"Within two weeks"

Predicting swift action on the resolution, Mr. Conroy said: "We could be in business within two weeks."

At last Tuesday's committee meeting, Donald D. Pomerleau, the city police commissioner, said he favors a full investigation to clear the air but maintained that he would not release sensitive information in an open session.

Senator Conroy did not rule out the possibility of closed sessions, saying the committee would "consider" Mr. Pomerleau's request for secrecy.

Asked if the decision to move ahead with the investigation meant that he disbelieved Mr. Pomerleau's assertion that none of the spying by the department's Inspectional Services Division went beyond standard police requirements, Mr. Conroy said:

"I think it's a matter of philosophy. I'm talking of invasion of privacy. . . . Citizens who did not commit crimes had their privacy invaded. We're going to do something to

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make sure that doesn't happen again."

Steny H. Hoyer (D., Prince Georges), the Senate president, said that he believes Mr. Conroy's committee should handle the investigation and predicted the Senate would grant the necessary authority.

The clamor for an investigation of the inspectional services division grew out of newspaper reports alleging spying on such nontraditional subjects as black political leaders and newsmen.

The department defended itself earlier this month in an eight-page memorandum to Governor Mandel, saying that it never spied on anyone unless "there has been a solid allegation of criminal activity."

Mr. Conroy said that while the investigating committee would focus on the city Police Department's secret intelligence activities, "it could go beyond" to examine spying by the State Police and county police forces.

The committee chairman said he would meet with Mr. Hoyer to discuss funds for hiring of clerks, stenographers and investigators and to look into the possibility of Army and FBI co-operation.

Whether the hearings are open or closed, they will not become a local version of the United States Senate's Watergate hearings because under state law the proceedings can not be "televised, filmed or broadcast.