PDT 6/5/69

U.S. Accuses 4 Police in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, June 4 (UPI)—The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice brought brutality charges against four policemen before a grand jury today despite objections by Police Commissioner Frank L. Rizzo and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP).

Rizzo said the District Attorney's office had investigated the incidents and cleared all four men of any "wrongdoing."

John Harrington, president of FOP, blamed the case on politics and said former United States Attorney Drew J. O'Keefe was trying to embarrass his successor, Louis C. Bechtle, who took office last week.

Bechtle denied "political involvement of any kind." He said the case was originated in Washington by the Attorney General's office.

Patrolmen Howard Blumenthal and Edward Barth were accused by 14-year-old Herbert Lewis of beating him when he was arrested last Sept. 22. The two policemen said the boy had been tampering with a jeep and that he kicked both of them in the groin before Blumenthal struck him with his nightstick.

Patrolmen Edward Spangler and William Collins were accused by Willie Laughinghouse, 33, who suffered head cuts requiring three stitches when he was arrested on a motor vehicle violation charge on June 10, 1967. The policemen said Laughinghouse tried to pull off Spangler's badge and grabbed for his revolver before he was subdued.