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Mitchell Says U.S. Citizens Might Use Vigilante Tactics

By Ken Clawson
Washington Post Staff Writer

INDIANAPOLIS, Oct. 16—
Attorney General John N. Mitchell said today that citizens "might have to resort to vigilante tactics" to combat widespread lawlessness in the nation.

Mitchell said he did not condone such tactics, but pointed out that citizens taking the law into their own hands have precedents in American history.

"Society may take it upon itself to defend itself against this lawlessness," Mitchell said. "I hope it doesn't come about, but citizens might have to resort to vigilante tactics."

Asked about weapons that vigilante groups would need, Mitchell said state authorities should "remove guns where they are illegally held, and review local and state laws on weapons to evaluate their strictness."

At a press conference open-

ing his day-long visit to campaign for Rep. Richard Roudebush for the Senate, Mitchell said there was no danger that government itself would swing the legal pendulum in favor of police power. Government will not create a repressive society, he said, because "the constitution and the courts control that."

But he emphasized that law and order is the key issue in the Nov. 3 elections. He said the passage earlier this week by Congress of the organized crime and narcotics bills indicated that Democrats were "jumping on the law-and-order bandwagon."

The Attorney General was asked if members of Congress as well as foreign diplomats have been the subject of kidnaping and assassination threats by radical groups.

He said these threats indeed had been received by the Justice Department and the FBI, and some of them came from groups that "we might anticipate are capable of carrying out such acts."

While he would not name any specific group, he said the threats came from "nihilist radicals and militants" dedicated to the destruction of American society.

He said that the law does not permit federal protection of Congressmen or Cabinet officers who receive such threats but that the FBI makes individuals named in threats aware of the existence and possible source of them.

See MITCHELL, A9, Col. 6

Mitchell Sees Use Of Vigilante Tactics

MITCHELL, From A1

Mitchell, Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin and Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.) all spoke to a meeting of major Indiana Republican contributors today, with the Attorney General saying that incumbent Sen. Vance Hartke had voted soft on crime in 1968, but that in the fact of a strong Republican challenge was now voting in favor of administration bills.

Observers here said that while Roudebush had made a very strong early challenge against Hartke, the veteran Democrat in recent weeks has been coming on strong and that the race is now a tossup.

As Mitchell entered the club in which the meeting was

held, William Keith, GOP committeeman from Indiana, told Mitchell that he had "42 big ones"—major financial contributors—that he wanted the attorney general to "turn on."

Earlier, Mitchell spoke at the Indiana University Indianapolis Law School. He saluted urban law schools for turning out young lawyers attuned to their dual responsibilities to law and the communities.

While he urged that law students assist the disadvantaged, he said it should be acknowledged that they are inexperienced and usually immature, and need control by qualified, working lawyers.