Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) not only knew of FBI eavesdropping in criminal cases, but stepped it up while he was Attorney General, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover declared in a letter made public yesterday.

Kennedy issued an immediate denial through his Washington office. The Senator declined to answer newsmen's questions directly.

Hoover made the explosive allegations in correspondence he sent this week to Rep. H. R. Gross (R-Iowa).

The documents put the FBI Director and his former

boss squarely and publicly att odds over who was responsible for the rash of "bugging" cases that have plagued the Justice Department.

Kennedy has repeatedly said that he did not authorize any general program of electronic eavesdropping or wiretapping. He said in a statement yesterday that "apparently Mr. Hoover has been misinformed."

'Exhibited Great Interest'

Hoover declared that Kennedy specifically "approved policy for the use of microphones covering both security and major criminal cases.

"Mr. Kennedy, during his term of office," Hoover con-tinued, "exhibited great interest in pursuing such matters and, while in different metropolitan areas, not only listened to the results of microphone surveillances (eavesdropping) but raised questions relative to obtaining better equipment."
The FBI's use of such

devices, Hoover said, "was obviously increased at Mr. Kennedy's insistence while he was in office."

In support, Hoover sent Gross an Aug. 17, 1961, memo that Kennedy signed. It was typed on FBI stationery.

The memo said: "In connection with the use of microphone surveillances, it is frequently necessary to lease a special telephone line in order to moniter such a surveillance." Then it went on to say that "certain technical difficulties" making this impossible in New York City had been overcome.

Kennedy Cited Letter

"If we are permitted to use leased telephone lines as adjunct to our microphone surveillances, this type of coverage can be materially ex-tended both in security and major criminal cases," the major criminal cases," the memo added. "Accordingly, your approval of our utilizing See HOOVER, A18, Col. 1

RFK Extended Use of 'Bugs,' Hoover .

By George Lardner Jr. Washington Post Staff Writer

this leased line arrangement distinction between telephone is requested."

was a typewritten line read- authorizations ever nedy's signature below it.

Kennedy's response cited a tional security. Feb. 17, 1966, letter sent to torney General.

the Justice Department the use of these devices with Evans drew the traditional you in national security or

taps and eavesdropping. He At the bottom of the memo said that "the only wiretap "Approved" with Ken- ted" to Kennedy for case-bycase approval involved nat-

"Since prior Attorneys Genhim at his request by Court-eral had informed the FBI ney A. Evans, a Washington that the use of microphones, attorney and assistant FBI di-rector while Kennedy was At-taps, need not be specifically rney General. approved by the Attorney As FBI liaison officer with General, I did not discuss

other cases, nor do I know of any written material that was sent to you at any time con-cerning this procedure, or concerning the use, specific location or other details as to installation of any such devices in Las Vegas, Nevada, or anywhere else," Evans concluded.

Memo Apparently Overlooked

This, apparently, overlooked the memo Hoover produced. After conferring with the Senator, a spokesman for Kennedy said Kennedy recalled it but considered it "prospective in tone through-

Hoover clearly took it as a mandate to go ahead with bugging" when the FBI equipment." The Senator's ofthought it was required. But if the memo contained any red flags that Kennedy should have heeded, they went unheeded.

"He was extremely busy with the Bayof Pigs at the time," Kennedy's press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, said yesterday. "He assumed that they would come to him in each case when they wanted

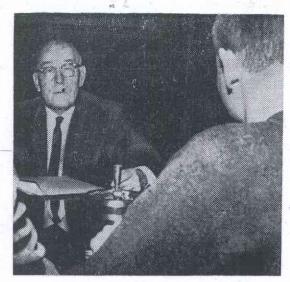
to do this and they never did."
Reminded that the FBI's practice was to seek individual approvals only for wiretapping (which is generally prohibited by law) and not for eavesdropping, Mankiewicz re-pilied: "The Senator didn't know that (at the time)."

Kennedy acknowledged two

occasions when he listened to bugged conversations in the presence of FBI agents but declared through his office that he was unaware the bugging had been done by the FBI.

Accusations Answered

"They were playing conversations between hoods-in Chicago and New York, let's say," his office said. "The implication was, strongly, that I the conversations had been I



Rep. H. R. Gross telling newsmen about eavesdropping.

Hoover also had said Kennedy inquired about "better fice suggested that he may simply have been asking why he couldn't hear the conversations clearly enough.

In his letter to dated Wednesday, the FBI Director also declared that "all wiretaps (as distinct from eavesdroping) have always been approved in writing, in advance, by the Attorney General."

Hoover included a May 25, 1961, letter from Assistant Attorney General Herbert J. Miller sent to Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.). Miller said that as of early 1960, the FBI was maintaining 78 wiretraps and 67 electronic devices, mostly in the field of internal security but a few relating "to organized crime."

Kennedy's office said the Senator never saw Miller's letter.