

U.S. Is Expected to Admit FBI Used 'Bugs' on Baker

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The Justice Department is expected to admit in Federal Court today that FBI agents used electronic "bugs" to eavesdrop on Robert G. (Bobby) Baker while he was serving as Secretary to the Senate Majority.

Transcripts of FBI tape recordings — made in a Las Vegas gambling casino, a Washington hotel suite and possibly other cities—are likely to be produced. It is entirely possible they will shed light on Baker's relationships with prominent Government officials.

The "bugging" of Baker's private conversations by the FBI is the central issue in an effort by Baker's attorneys to suppress evidence underlying his indictment for fraud and income tax evasion.

They contend that evidence against Baker was gathered illegally by FBI agents using electronic listening devices.

The extent to which the FBI eavesdropped on Baker and the nature of the information the agency gathered are to be the subject of today's hearing



Associated Press
BOBBY BAKER

... was FBI listening?

before Federal District Judge Oliver Gasch.

Justice Department officials already have admitted to the Supreme Court that an eavesdropping device was installed by the FBI in February, 1963, in the Carlton Hotel suite of Fred B. Black Jr., a Washington business consultant.

There is a strong presumption that the device picked up conversations involving Baker.

He and Black were business associates and he was a frequent visitor in the Carlton suite.

Baker's lawyers—Edward Bennett Williams and Peter F. Taft—also have charged that conversations involving Baker were monitored by an FBI "bug" planted in the office of Las Vegas gambler Edward Levinson. Baker and Levinson had joint business interests, too.

What other listening devices may be involved in the Baker case has not been revealed publicly. But Baker's lawyers insist that others are involved and have sought permission from the Court to delve through the FBI's extensive library of tape recordings.

This move has been resisted by Justice Department attorneys. They claim that Baker's lawyers are trying to start a "fishing expedition" into FBI documents, and have urged the courts to make available only those tapes of conversation in which Baker was a "participant."

The Department's position is that the FBI's eavesdropping was wholly unrelated to the Baker indictment and that the evidence against him was gathered legally.