

BROWN WIRETAP ROLE IS DENIED

Had No Knowledge of
Action—Gremillion

TP 9/24/79
Louisiana Attorney General Jack Gremillion said Tuesday he had no knowledge of an alleged wiretap on the telephone of H. Rap Brown, a black power militant.

A spokesman for Gov. John J. McKeithen also said no wiretapping was done by state-level agencies.

Both statements followed a Justice Department memorandum to a Federal District Court in New Orleans disclosing that Brown's phone was tapped by Louisiana authorities.

The court is considering Brown's appeal on a conviction of violating the Federal Firearms Act by transporting a carbine from New Orleans to New York while under indictment. Brown is appealing a five-year maximum sentence.

A hearing was to have been held Wednesday before the sentencing judge, Lansing L. Mitchell, to determine if Brown's conviction was a result of wiretapping.

The case has been continued, however, because William M. Kunstler Jr., a Brown attorney, had to be in Chicago.

Kunstler is engaged in the trial of eight persons charged with conspiracy in connection with disturbances at the Democratic national convention last year.

Earlier this year, the Justice Department's lawyers told the court that four separate taps — three apparently installed by FBI agents and regarded as legal by the government — were installed at various times on Brown's phone.

The government sent a log of the conversation monitored by Louisiana authorities to attorneys for Brown, one-time chairman of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. The federally monitored conversations were not released.

The Justice Department said electronic surveillance by Louisiana "was not conducted at the request of the federal government."

Gremillion said Tuesday that he did not request surveillance of Brown's conversations.

"The man didn't mean that much to me," said Gremillion, adding that the tapping was not done at the request of his office and that he knows nothing about it.

"If it was done by anybody else, it was not authorized by me," said Gremillion. "But of course if some other authorities — if anybody else did it — it wasn't at my suggestion nor was I aware of it."

Louis Quinn, McKeithen's executive secretary, said, "We have no knowledge at the state level of any wiretapping of H. Rap Brown."

Both city officials and the East Baton Rouge Parish district attorney's office also denied tapping Brown's telephone. Brown is a native of Baton Rouge.