

Gravel Retreats on Charge That FBI Removed Papers

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Sen. Mike Gravel (D-Alaska) said yesterday the FBI "could have been innocent bystanders" last week when personal papers allegedly were removed from the senator's Anchorage office.

A government investigation headed by U.S. Attorney Kent Edwards has cleared the FBI of any involvement in the incident, which had prompted Gravel to threaten to bring before the full Senate allegations that the FBI had violated the sanctity of his office.

Gravel, who said he was still keeping his options open, acknowledged that his staff in Alaska might have been misled by the manager of the Federal Building in Anchorage. He pointed out that his criticism of the FBI was based on reports from his staff in Alaska and was tentative because the exact circumstances have not been ascertained.

A secretary to Rep. Nicholas Begich (D-Alaska) told a security guard that three young "hippies" had been in her office trying to raise money for a demonstration Sept. 26 against the nuclear test at Amchitka Island, in the Aleutians. She said the group had tried to take over her office and expressed concern they might try the same thing at Gravel's office, also in the federal Building.

Hackman, the guard and a deputy U.S. marshal went to Gravel's office planning to eject the trio from the build-

ing. But the young people, whom Gravel said were his "volunteers," left as the officers arrived. Afterward, Hackman reportedly found a wad of notebook paper in the hall outside Gravel's office.

Hackman first threw the papers into a wastebasket, but later decided to report the incident to the FBI because of Mr. Nixon's upcoming visit to the city. Hackman retrieved the papers from the trash. The papers, government sources said, pertained to a party in connection with the anti-test demonstration and some dodging and telephone numbers.

Gravel charged yesterday that Hackman has changed his story. He said his staff first learned of the incident when Hackman came to the office a second time, apologized to a secretary and said that he had been told by the FBI to take papers out of Gravel's office.

In a telephone interview, Hackman refused to discuss any aspect of the incident.

GSA in Washington, for whom Hackman works, confirmed the government version of the story.

After the incident was reported Saturday night, Gravel said that if it were true "some agent has certainly overstepped his ground."

On Tuesday, Gravel told of the incident on the Senate floor and said he was considering a Senate investigation. He said there was confusion about what exactly happened, but that it was clear the FBI had kept his Anchorage office under surveillance the previous Friday and that "by the end of the day the FBI had possession of some of my office papers."

A staffer in Washington said none of the Anchorage personnel could identify any of the FBI agents who allegedly kept the office under surveillance last Friday. He acknowledged that there was no way to determine if they were really FBI agents.