

Wednesday, Oct. 20, 1976

Letter Asks Levy To Order Probe of Ford's Testimony

Associated Press

Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman (D-N.Y.) asked Attorney General Edward H. Levi yesterday to order the Watergate special prosecutor to investigate whether President Ford lied during hearings confirming him as Vice President.

She said a quick and limited inquiry would suffice to prove whether Ford lied when he told two congressional committees in 1973 that he acted on his own and not under orders from President Nixon when he helped block the first congressional investigation of Watergate.

Ford testified under oath that he met twice with Republicans on the House Banking Committee, who later voted with four Democrats to deny subpoena power to the committee's late chairman, Wright Patman (D-Tex.), and thus kill the investigation. Ford said he did not recall any meetings with White House officials on the Patman hearings.

"If Gerald Ford lied under oath in order to conceal Richard Nixon's direct orders that he block the Patman investigation, his action served to hide Mr. Nixon's commanding role in the cover-up conspiracy," Holtzman told Levi in a letter sent yesterday.

She said this would make Ford part of the overall Watergate cover-up and thus part of the jurisdiction of Watergate Special Prosecutor Charles F. Ruff.

She said Ruff should listen to the taped conversations between Ford and Nixon that occurred between the Watergate break-in in early June and the 1972 presidential election.

In addition, she said Ruff should interview former White House counsel John W. Dean III who recently repeated his 1973 Watergate testimony that Nixon directed former congressional liaison staffer Richard Cook to talk to Ford about blocking the Patman probe. She said Ruff also should talk to Cook, former congressional relations official William Timmons and former Nixon aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

Last week, Ruff refused a request from Holtzman and Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) to investigate Ford's possible role in the cover-up. He said he had no jurisdiction over the question of whether Ford lied in his confirmation hearings and that the Justice Department would handle any possible abuses in that area.

Conyers has asked Levi to either investigate Ford's possible perjury before the congressional committees or order Ruff to do so.