

Watergate Cost Tops \$6 Million

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The White House had spent a total of \$382,474 on attorney fees, salaries and travel on Watergate matters up to March 24, the General Accounting Office estimated yesterday.

That would bring the known total cost to the taxpayer of Watergate to \$6.5 million, but some experts believe the overall costs are higher than that.

The budget for the Watergate special prosecutor's office is \$2.8 million.

The House Judiciary Committee, which is conducting the impeachment inquiry, originally received \$1 million for its inquiry but last month asked for an additional \$500,000.

The Senate Watergate committee received \$1.5 million for its investigation.

GAO spent more than \$100,000 investigating the spending of government funds on the Nixon homes,

and the three Watergate grand juries have cost the taxpayers more than \$225,000.

GAO made the estimate of White House expenses at the request of Rep. Edward R. Roybal (D-Calif.).

The figure included funds spent by the White House as well as money spent by other departments for persons on loan to the White House to work on Watergate problems, GSA said in a letter to Roybal.

"The White House office does not maintain accounting or other records which would permit us to obtain precise information on the costs incurred on Watergate," GAO said.

To make its estimate, GAO said, it examined White House payroll records and interviewed staff members to determine the percentage of their time devoted to Watergate.

The cost, as estimated by GAO, includes 8 per cent of gross salary for the government's contribution to retirement, health and insurance plans.

GAO listed seven persons as of March 24 who were detailed to the White House from other agencies to work on Watergate matters. There were from the Justice Department.