

Senator Says Nixon Had to Know Bug Plan

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Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.) said yesterday it is "inconceivable" that President Nixon did not have prior knowledge of plans to bug the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee.

Sen. Brooke conceded there was a possibility Mr. Nixon's campaign aides might have concealed the plan. But he added:

"It is difficult to understand how persons working with the President would not make known to him an enterprise of this magnitude involving hundreds of thousands of dollars and involving such a potential risk."

"It is inconceivable to me that they would not have told the President about this matter. In fact, that they wouldn't have asked for his approval or disapproval."

Sen. Brooke was interviewed on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who was Mr. Nixon's campaign manager when two employees of the campaign committee and five other men bugged the Democratic offices last June, admitted last week he knew of the plan. He said he refused to approve it and insisted that Mr. Nixon had no knowledge of it before it happened.

But Sen. Brooke said Mr. Nixon bears responsibility for the Watergate incident, regardless of whether he knew about it.

"I don't think that the President can escape it under any circumstances," he said. "The President at least is responsible for the persons that he hires that work with him."

He added that he thought Mr. Nixon should have uncovered the truth about the case immediately after it happened and dismissed those involved.

"Unquestionably," he said, "the President and the presidency has been harmed by the Watergate incident."

But Sen. Brooke, who indicated he might seek the presidential nomination in 1976, predicted the scandal will not hurt the Republican Party.

He said it was carried out by "misguided and unwise individuals" without the approval of the Republican Party.

He said it was "too soon" to determine how Watergate has changed Mr. Nixon's relationship with Congress or the GOP. "The President has not been found guilty, personally guilty or even knowledge of the Watergate incident prior to its actual happening," he said. "I have no knowledge that the President did know."