

Cox Builds His Task Force

Special Prosecutor's Offices Spartan, Secure

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Yellow stickers on the phones warn against the hazards of bugging. Hallway posters emblazoned with a bundle of dynamite wired to a clock and a telephone read like leftovers from World War II:

"LOOSE TALK IS EXPLOSIVE
... ANYTIME."

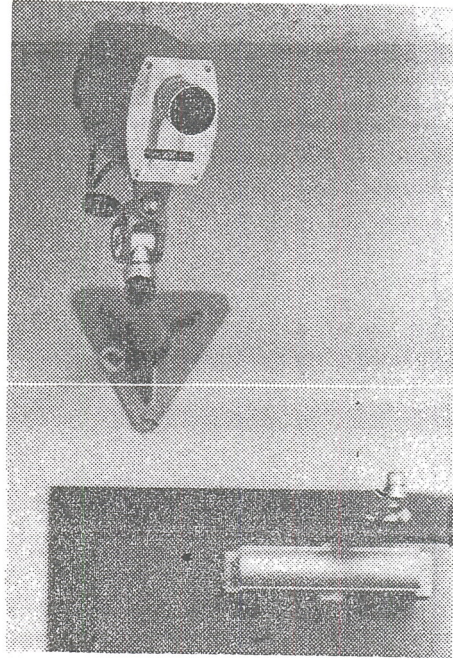
Except for those little touches the decor is spartan. It is probably the only federal agency that does not have a single portrait of President Nixon decking its walls.

The reason seems obvious. The Watergate special prosecution force wants no sign of allegiance to the administration it is busily investigating.

No one knows how long the job will take, but the pace is intense. Witnesses come and go from Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox's headquarters here in complete secrecy. As many as three or four memos a day are dispatched to the FBI, each calling for a fresh flurry of detective work. The assignments are being carried out on at least five fronts, all requiring a prodigious review by the newly installed prosecutors of congressional inquiries, grand jury transcripts, lawsuits, newspaper stories, and thousands of FBI interviews already conducted.

For Cox and his staff, the catch-up work is far from complete. As special assistant James F. Neal, the prosecutor in charge of the main Watergate investigation here puts it, "I'm trying to look forward and backward at the same time. Sometimes I get the feeling that I can read all day and be farther behind at night because more testimony has been taken."

The preoccupation at the moment appears to be not in indictments, but in building up a staff and a system that can fairly guarantee that no allegations get overlooked, that no links between



Photos by James Atherton—The Washington Post

A TV security camera, one of two, watching lobby at prosecutor Cox's offices.

one case and another go unnoticed, that no important pieces of evidence go undeveloped.

According to associate special prosecutor James Vorenberg, that means an organization that doesn't stand on the formalities of specific assignments and chains of command. "It's important," he says, "that we not become bureaucratic."

It is a determination that almost seems compromised by the tight security of Cox's ninth-floor headquarters at 1425 K St. NW, in downtown Washington. The prosecutors asked for safeguards that

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would make it "as secure as the most secure FBI facility" and they got them, courtesy of the Justice Department's chief of building security, Winslow Joy. Even the high-rise windows have alarm tapes on them in case burglars more expert than G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt climb down from the roof or up from the street.

It's easier to get to the ninth floor just by taking the elevator, but once there, visitors find that the only marked doors, aside from the rest rooms, say "Grocery Manufacturers of America, Inc."

The Watergate special prosecution force, which takes up the rest of the floor, is hidden behind a single metal door with a bell and a little sign that says, "Push Bell."

Closed circuit TV cameras monitor everyone who gets off the elevators. Specially picked guards from the GSA's Federal Protective Service stand round-the-clock watch in an anteroom just behind the metal door, checking out identifications and passing out badges for those permitted any further. Green for permanent employees. Yellow for those in the process of being hired. Red for visitors, who must be escorted every step of the way.

Worn around the neck on a metal chain, the badges are collected again on the way out, even from staffers headed for the restrooms.

Request Files

Behind the anteroom is a crescent-shaped warren of offices that winds around most of the building. Their file cabinets have combination locks. The most sensitive documents are kept in

a special room, many of them reportedly in boxes that have yet to be sorted out.

Fewer than a half-dozen members of Cox's staff are cleared for automatic access to any documents in the house. The rest, including local Watergate prosecutors Earl Silbert, Seymour Glanzer and Donald Campbell, have to put in requests for at least some of the files they might want.

"We all fight for as much

time as we can get to read the raw material," says Vorenberg. But the investigations are far from a standstill for that. The government's probe of alleged political saboteur Donald Segretti, already under indictment and continuing investigation by a federal grand jury in Tampa, Fla., is expected to be extended to another grand jury in Houston, Tex., this week. Cox's men evidently feel that they have their case against former White House counsel John W. Dean III nailed down in the Watergate inquiry here. Only a sense of opportunities for a tighter and perhaps more comprehensive set of charges appears to be holding back a massive obstruction-of-justice indictment by the Watergate grand jury.

Carrying out the assignments for Cox is a staff largely composed of veteran prosecutors from the late Robert F. Kennedy's regime as Attorney General and junior lawyers with degrees from Harvard Law School.

Starting with Cox, a 1960 campaign adviser to the late John F. Kennedy and U.S. Solicitor General under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, the six highest-paid lawyers on the Watergate force all worked at the Justice Department during the Kennedy administration. To some, it might almost seem a government-in-exile, but Cox has waved away any suggestions of partisanship as "exaggerated" musings of the press. He has, he pointed out at a news conference last Monday, also hired two Republicans. Presumably there will be more to come.

Five Task Forces

Sworn in May 25, Cox started out at the Justice Department with two fellow professors from Harvard law, Vorenberg and Philip B. Heymann, who will work with him through the summer as associate special prosecutors. Six of the first 11 attorneys they hired were Harvard graduates, most of them former students.

According to Vorenberg, the alumni cast was chiefly a result of expediency.

"A lot of the people we picked initially were people that Phil and Archie and I reached out for and asked to come here on short notice," he said. As a consequence,

he said, they focused on lawyers they knew from Harvard who might be willing to make a quick jump.

Most of them have been assigned to the five task forces that have been formed. The one headed by Neal, a 43-year-old Vanderbilt graduate and Nashville lawyer who successfully prosecuted Teamsters ex-president Jimmy Hoffa for jury-tampering, is working on the Watergate break-in and cover-up.

Two others, one investigating 1972 presidential campaign financing and the second digging into Segretti's activities, are headed by 44-year-old Thomas F. McBride (Columbia Law School), who also prosecuted organized crime and political corruption cases at the Justice Department in the early '60s.

Associate special prosecutor Heymann is tracking the work of the White House "plumbers," including their 1971 break-in at the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in the Pentagon Papers case.

Cross Checking

The fifth task force is investigating allegations involving the International Telephone & Telegraph Corp. and the Justice Department's controversial settlement of three antitrust cases against the giant conglomerate. The inquiry is being directed by Joseph J. Connolly (University of Pennsylvania Law School), a 32-year-old Philadelphia Republican and onetime assistant to former Solicitor General Erwin N. Griswold.

Miscellaneous

Tips, leads and new lines of investigation, which he refuses to disclose, are being fielded by Vorenberg.

Two other lawyers, Peter F. Rient (Harvard Law '63), a former trial attorney in the Justice Department's criminal division, and Nathaniel H. Akerman (Harvard '72), an attorney from the Federal Trade Commission, are forming a track of all the growing files "information unit" to keep and to try to make sure that pertinent documents get to all the pertinent prosecutors.

"We're beginning to set up a cross-checking system in a form that, we hope, will make computer programming easy," Vorenberg says. "When witness X appears here, we want to know every place in all the investigation that witness was mentioned.

At the same time, staff counsel Philip A. Lacovara, 29, a Columbia University graduate and most recently deputy solicitor general, has been assigned to study such questions as whether President Nixon can be subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury and whether a President can be indicted in advance of impeachment proceedings—points that Cox wants studied even if he doesn't use the answers.

By now, the steadily growing staff stands at 33, with lawyers (18) outnumbering secretaries and clerical personnel (about 12). Twelve-to-18-hour workdays are routine. "We've got some pretty high-priced people doing the stapling work," says James S. Doyle (Boston College '56), a former national reporter for The Washington Star-News who joined Cox as a special assistant last week.

The top echelon and their prospective salaries, which

are awaiting final approval, include Cox, \$38,000; Deputy Special Prosecutor Henry S. Ruth Jr., \$36,000; Neal, McBride, and Doyle, \$35,000 each, and Lacovara, the second Republican staffer, \$32,000.

Vorenberg and Heymann, both of whom also worked at the Justice Department under Robert Kennedy, are drawing \$35,000 rates until they return to Harvard. Ruth, who will stay on as Cox's deputy, is a Pennsylvania law school graduate and another veteran of Bobby Kennedy's organized crime and racketeering section at Justice.

The staff, however, is far from complete. Cox has said he plans to take on another deputy to work with Ruth. In all, he predicts a force of some 50 lawyers plus supporting personnel. Vorenberg estimates that close to 1,000 applications have piled up for the vacancies.

Why do so many want the jobs?

"To the extent that people say," Vorenberg reports, "they say because it's important to them or because they are very upset and they want to help change the climate in the country. It's that quality that comes across more than anything else."