

Senate Hearings On Gray Delayed

Post 3/24/73

WASHINGTON (AP) — Resumption of the Senate hearings on L. Patrick Gray's nomination to be FBI director have been put off in an apparent strategy move by his supporters.

A Senate Judiciary Committee spokesman said Friday the hearings will not be resumed before the week after next.

Although no reason was announced, there were indications Gray's supporters hoped for word on just where the White House stands before pushing his nomination further.

The strategy was described as waiting for a signal on whether the administration was going "to put some muscle" into seeking votes for Gray or was washing his hands of him.

In Key Biscayne, Fla., deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren was asked if Nixon would withdraw Gray's nomination.

"There is no intention of doing that," Warren said. "The President has submitted Mr. Gray's nomination. The President supports that nomination."

In his last day of testimony Thursday, Gray had said it was "probably correct" to say White House counsel John W. Dean III had lied to the FBI last June during its investigation of the Watergate bugging affair.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W. Va., had asked Gray if Dean had not lied in telling an FBI agent that he would have to check on whether E. Howard Hunt, one of the Watergate de-

fendants, had an office in the White House executive offices.

Byrd said this was only three days after Dean had the safe in Hunt's office in the executive office building opened and the contents removed.

The White House issued a statement in which Dean denied lying and which called the reference to him at the committee hearings "reprehensible, unfortunate, unfair and incorrect."

Dean said that as he recalled, FBI agents didn't ask him if Hunt had an office in the building but if they could visit it and he said he would have to check.

Gray, acting FBI director since last May, was before the committee for nine days. He testified he had not lobbied senators outside the hearing for votes and had turned down offers from friends to try to help him.

He said he had "to sit here in this pit" and try through his testimony to convince committee members and other senators they should support his nomination to succeed the late J. Edgar Hoover.

At the outset his chances of winning confirmation looked good, with Byrd, the assistant Democratic leader, the only senator who was openly opposing his appointment.

But now, after hearings that centered on the FBI's investigation of the Watergate case and Gray's relations with Dean, even supporters of the nomination say the outcome is in doubt.