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Saxbe reveals White House pressure

WASHINGTON (AP) — Atty. Gen. William B. Saxbe said Wednesday that White House aides to Richard M. Nixon repeatedly pressured him to interfere with the Watergate prosecution.

In an interview as he prepares to leave after a year as head of the Justice Department, Saxbe said the pressure was relayed in the form of outrage at what Nixon considered an invasion of executive privilege protecting presidential records from disclosure.

Saxbe, who has been named ambassador to India, said he looked into some of the complaints from Nixon aides but ultimately rebuffed all the attempts at pressure.

On another subject, Saxbe called for a high-level inquiry to determine whether

the nation gets its money's worth from the Central Intelligence Agency and other government spy operations.

President Ford and Congress should launch a wide-ranging joint investigation focusing on the effectiveness of all intelligence agencies rather than on recent charges that the CIA has conducted illegal domestic operations, Saxbe suggested.

Saxbe, who was appointed attorney general by Nixon, said Nixon advisers urged him at one point to provide department lawyers for Nixon's defense.

He said the aides urged him to undertake "the active defense of the President."

"It was suggested to me that it was the attorney general's obligation to actively defend him," he said.

Saxbe said he rejected that idea and set out to change the procedure by which some junior department lawyers had been loaned to the White House to help with Nixon's defense.

"I never felt the personnel should come from the Justice Department and gradually we phased it out so there was no one over there on the department payroll," he said.

Saxbe said the pressure came from people who never were involved in the Watergate affair but he declined to name names.

"Most of the people who talked to me were genuinely and thoroughly of the belief that Mr. Nixon was being martyred, that he wasn't guilty of those things charged," Saxbe said.