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Mansfield Irked at 'Bugging' FBI Role in Dowdy Case

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Sen. Mike Mansfield, no longer scoffing at the FBI's critics in the Capitol, said yesterday he is deeply disturbed by the disclosure that an FBI informer taped conversations with Rep. John Dowdy (D-Tex.).

Mansfield told reporters that he hoped Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) would broaden his investigation into civilian spying to look into the Dowdy case and other allegations that Capitol Hill telephones have been bugged.

Changes Mind

On Thursday, before the Dowdy surveillance came to light, Mansfield called criticism of the FBI and its director, J. Edgar Hoover, "more noise than substance."

But he changed his mind with the disclosure by U.S. District Judge Roszel Thomsen in Baltimore that, with the approval of Hoover and Attorney General John Mitchell, informer Nathan Cohen visited Dowdy in his House office Jan. 20, 1970, with a concealed tape recorder and taped his subsequent conversation with the congressman.

Cohen also permitted two telephone conversations between himself and Dowdy to be recorded.

Fraud

At the time Cohen agreed to cooperate with the FBI, he was under indictment on fraud charges. He later pleaded guilty and received a suspended sentence.

He was subsequently named as a co-conspirator — but not a defendant — in the government's bribery conspiracy case in which Dowdy is charged with accepting \$25,000 to intervene in a federal investigation of the now defunct Monarch Construction Co. of Silver Spring, Md.

Mansfield said the eavesdropping on Dowdy was not a proper use of FBI powers "even though they acted under a court order."

Boggs Charge

House Democratic leader Hale Boggs made a similar charge on the House floor April 6 and said he would offer evidence when the proper time came.

On Wednesday, Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said the FBI had spied on 40 to 60 "Earth Day" rallies across the nation last April 22.

Mitchell the next day confirmed that, saying FBI agents were present to keep an eye on known troublemakers.

At his news conference Friday night, President Nixon said:

"There is no question in my mind that Mr. Hoover's statement that no telephone in the Capitol has even been tapped by the FBI is correct."

In his conversation with reporters, Mansfield said he had changed his mind because the Dowdy incident and Muskie had both produced evidence to substantiate charges of secret surveillance of one type or another.

"If you've got evidence," Mansfield said, "lay it on the table. Muskie did present evidence: he's got something to back up his word."