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Kennedy May Probe Watergate

Washington

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, as chairman of a Senate judiciary subcommittee, has ordered a "preliminary inquiry" into the Watergate bugging incident and charges of political espionage and sabotage in the presidential campaign.

His move raises the possibility that his judiciary subcommittee could provide a focal point for Democrats as they try to develop their charges of political spying and sabotage against the Republican administration.

At this point, however, Kennedy is not committing himself to public subcommittee hearings before the November 7 elections.

LETTER

Kennedy spelled out his intentions to conduct a "preliminary inquiry" in a letter sent Thursday to the seven other members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Practices, which he heads.

While Kennedy's staff refused to make the letter public, its contents were disclosed by other Senate sources.

The Kennedy letter, made

clear that he intended to investigate not only the alleged bugging of the Democratic national committee headquarters in the Watergate apartments but also the general question of whether there has been "political espionage and sabotage" conducted during the current presidential campaign.

IMPLICATIONS

Both Senator George McGovern, the Democratic presidential candidate, and Senator Edmund S. Muskie, who unsuccessfully sought the presidential nomination, have suggested that during the campaign, including the primaries, they were the victims of acts of political sabotage.

Neither Democrat has specifically charged that the sabotage was directed by Republican officials supporting the re-election of President Nixon, although that has been the clear implication of their suggestions.

Both Muskie and McGovern staffers have described alleged specific instances of attempted political sabotage in their presidential campaigns.

The Kennedy letter to the subcommittee members was sent on the same day that Representative Wright Patman, as chairman of the House Banking Committee, was blocked in his attempt to have his committee investigate the Watergate bugging incident and charges of irregularities in campaign contributions.

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