

MITCHELL DOUBTS ACTIVISTS' CHARGE

Denies Knowing of Bugging
of 'Gainesville Eight'

PENSACOLA, Fla., April 25 (AP) — Former Attorney Gen. John N. Mitchell denied today any knowledge of Government surveillance of eight antiwar activists. He made the statement when he arrived to testify at a pretrial hearing for the group — sometimes called the "Gainesville-Eight" — which is accused of plotting to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention.

Mr. Mitchell added as he stepped off an airplane, "In fact I'm not even sure who the Gainesville Eight are."

Mr. Mitchell was called to appear as a witness for the men at their pretrial hearing.

Defense attorneys for the eight men — seven members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, known as V.V.A.W., and one supporter — contend that the Government illegally used Watergate-style bugging techniques to gather information that led to their indictments.

Until hours before Mr. Mitchell's scheduled court appearance, his attorney, William Hundley, objected to the defense subpoena.

'Avoid Cong Trip'

"We wanted to avoid a long trip to Pensacola," Mr. Hundley said. "But if the judge insists, the judge insists."

United States District Judge Winston E. Arnow, did insist. However, he said the possibility was "far-fetched" that there actually was "an electronic surveillance of the V.V.A.W. by private people," as the defense contends.

The subpoena left Mr. Mitchell little time to himself between Federal courtrooms. Yesterday he testified before a Federal grand jury in New York investigating a \$200,000 cash contribution by Robert L. Vesco, a financier, to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

The "Gainesville Eight," so named because the alleged plot was said to have been planned in Gainesville, Fla., are charged with conspiracy to disrupt the Republican convention with bullets, bombs and high-powered slingshots.

The defendants are Scott Camil, 26 years old, and Stanley K. Michelson, Jr., 23, both of Gainesville; John Kniffen, 25, and William J. Patterson, 24, both of Austin, Tex.; Peter J. Mahoney, 23, of New York; Alton C. Foss, 25, of Hialeah, Fla., and Donald P. Perdue, 23, of Hollywood, Fla., who are all members of the antiwar group, and John Briggs, 20, of Gainesville, described as a supporter.

Members of the group were active in organizing marches and demonstrations at both the Republican and Democratic conventions last summer at Miami Beach.

Mitchell Doubts Indictment

WASHINGTON, April 15 (UPI) — Mr. Mitchell does not believe he will be indicted by the Watergate grand jury. Nor does he think the scandal may rub off on President Nixon.

In a telephone interview last night, he declared that his "conscience is clear" about the break-in and bugging of Democratic national headquarters while he was serving as President Nixon's campaign manager.

Asked if he thought the scandal might touch the President, Mr. Mitchell replied: "I don't see how he could possibly be touched by it. He is trying to get at the cancerous part."

Asked about the possibility of being indicted, he answered: "I can't imagine what for. When you've done what you've done in the interest of your country."

Asked about the possibility that his wife, Martha, might be called to testify before the Watergate grand jury, as he himself did last week, Mr. Mitchell replied:

"That's the last thing in the world. They've got enough troubles."