

Reagan Says Bugging Was Not Criminal

SACRAMENTO — (UPI) — Governor Reagan says the Watergate spies should not be considered criminals because they "are not criminals at heart."

Reagan, who espouses a strict law and order philosophy, conceded yesterday that the electronic bugging of the Watergate Democratic Party headquarters was illegal but said "criminal" was too harsh a term to use.

In his first public statement on Watergate since President Nixon's speech to the nation Monday, the Governor told reporters it had been "sort of ignored" throughout the episode that the bugging participants were "well-meaning individuals" committed to re-electing the President.

"They did something that was stupid and foolish and was not criminal—it was illegal," Reagan said. "Illegal is a better word than criminal because I think criminal has a different connotation.

"I think the tragedy of this is that men who are not criminals at heart and certainly not engaged in criminal activities committed a criminal or illegal act and now must bear the consequences," he said.