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Gurney Asks U.S. Probe of Payoff Claim

Reuter

Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) said yesterday he has asked the Justice Department to investigate charges that payoffs were made by a Florida builder to a person claiming to be one of his aides.

The senator, a member of the Senate Watergate committee, made the request following reports in Florida newspapers that a builder had made illegal payments to persons claiming to work for Gurney.

Gurney said in a press statement: "I have never authorized any of the persons charged in the news article to solicit any such monies for me, nor have any of those people ever made known to me that they were soliciting these alleged payoffs in my name.

"Moreover, the federal prosecutors have never advised me about these charges."

An aide to Gurney said Larry Williams, who was named in the press reports as saying he had worked with Gurney, was never in fact on the senator's payroll. Williams is a former finance chairman of the Republican Party in Florida.

Gurney said he had asked the Justice Department to investigate the charges and had offered his full cooperation in the investigation.