

Watergate Data Probed by FBI For Tampering

Jaworski Requests Inquiry

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating the possible alteration of some Watergate documents submitted by the White House to Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

One memorandum on White House stationery obtained by Jaworski has two paragraphs cut from the second page, as if by scissors, according to knowledgeable sources.

To investigate suspected tampering with this and other documents, the FBI has sought official White House logs dating back many months to see who had access to Watergate-related files, and who may have photocopied such files, the sources said.

The FBI inquiry, undertaken at Jaworski's request, was thwarted for a time by White House officials who refused to provide the agency with some of the logs it wanted to examine, these sources said. The FBI now has been given all the logs it wants to see, an administration official said.

It could not be learned precisely how many documents are suspected of having been tampered with, or what areas of Jaworski's overall Watergate inquiry they relate to.

Asked to confirm the existence of such an investigation, FBI spokesman George Quinn referred all questions to Jaworski's office. An aide to Jaworski said, "We have no comment whatsoever."

Presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said, "The White House has been and continues to cooperate fully with the FBI on any investigation that they're undertaking."

Ziegler declined to answer further questions.

One source said the apparent alteration of some documents may have occurred at an early date, even before the appointment last year of Archibald Cox, Jaworski's predecessor, who was fired by President Nixon Oct. 20 after five months in office.

He based this statement on what he called "a very clumsy job" on some alterations, saying they appeared to have been done hurriedly by someone who believed the documents would never be provided as evidence to prosecutors.

This source, as well as another, cited the excising of a White House memo that left the second page—cut from the top—shorter in length than the first.

This document, after beginning with an introduction, was said to continue with a paragraph numbered "3," indicat-

See WATERGATE, A22, Col. 1

WATERGATE, From A1

ing that the first two paragraphs had been cut away. The subject matter of the memo could not be learned.

A high administration official, stressing he had no specific knowledge of any altered documents, suggested that if any alterations have been found they could have occurred prior to last April 30.

That was the date Mr. Nixon announced the resignations of his top assistants, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, and fired John W. Dean III as his counsel.

The files of these officials were subsequently locked up and placed under guard at the White House.

Discussing deletions in some documents, one source said Jaworski has different copies of an Aug. 11, 1971, memorandum to Ehrlichman from Egil (Bud) Krogh Jr. and David Young, two former members of the White House "plumbers."

One copy—identical to that obtained by the Senate Watergate committee—is missing the fifth paragraph, which Ehrlichman testified was deleted because it referred to a national security operation beyond the committee's scope.

Jaworski has another copy with a different deletion, the source said. But he minimized the importance of this by saying the special prosecutor knows what is missing because he also has obtained an unabridged version of the same memo.

Asked if he knew whether Ehrlichman's documents were altered by anyone, Frank M. Strickler, one of Ehrlichman's Washington attorneys, said, "Anything I said would be speculative, and it wouldn't be fair to anyone to speculate."

Although Jaworski did not spell out details, he was apparently referring to the FBI probe of altered documents when he said in a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee last week:

"We have been promised certain documents in connection with an FBI investigation, at our request, into the possible obstruction of justice arising out of the destruction or alteration of evidence."

It was not clear from the letter whether Jaworski was also referring to tape recordings when he spoke of "alteration of evidence," and he has declined to elaborate. There was a report in The Washington Post—denied by the White House—that some Watergate tapes may be re-recordings rather than originals.