

'Political Ties' to Nixon

Gray Rejects Charges

By Ronald J. Ostrow
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Washington

L. Patrick Gray III has dismissed as "not well founded" charges that his past associations with President Nixon should have barred him from becoming acting director of the FBI.

Returning a telephone call from a reporter seeking an interview, the blunt but affable Navy veteran opened the conversation by abruptly volunteering that he had been reading newspaper criticism of his appointment.

"I saw all that," he said. "Not well founded."

Gray said he has never been "a political adviser or operative" for Mr. Nixon, including the seven-month period in 1960 when he served on the then vice president's personal staff.

"My chores were all non-political in nature," said Gray, who retired as a captain from the navy with 20 years service to join Mr. Nixon's staff. "I worked primarily in defense and in organizational affairs within the vice president's office."

"When the (1960 presiden-



L. PATRICK GRAY III
Acting FBI director

tial) campaign began to crank up," he said, "my job was working with (office) space, working to get people in — volunteers, like I set up a big lawyers group here in Washington."

BACKGROUND

While denying he was a political aide to Mr. Nixon, Gray indicated he could see why someone might want to take a look at his background.

He said:

"There are enough outward manifestations to indicate to a very sharp-minded individual that we've got to talk to this guy Gray and we've got to ask him some very specific questions about the chores he has performed for the President before buying his statement."

"My first job when I went to the vice president's office was to work with a group of

management consultants to streamline and organize the office so that it could function effectively," Gray said.

He recalled that he and another aide "walked the streets here in Washington finding space as the campaign staff was building."

FRIENDSHIP

Gray said his friendship with Mr. Nixon, whom he first met in 1947, "is not a close, personal, buddy-buddy type of friendship. It's formed on the basis of professional competence and mutual respect and admiration and affection and trust."

He said the relationship began to develop in 1958 when as a special assistant to the secretary of defense he attended National Security Council and cabinet meetings and "observed the (then) vice president in action."

Gray said he was surprised to learn last week following FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's death that some high-ranking FBI officials were thinking about retiring from the bureau.

"I thought it was part of the general trauma and grief these people were probably going through, figuring that now that Mr. Hoover is gone, 'that's it, that's the termination of my service' . . . sort of my world is ended."

SECRETARY

He said he followed up a Wednesday meeting with 15 of Mr. Hoover's top assistants by calling Friday on Helen Gandy, the former

director's long-time personal secretary. Gray said she took him on a 35-minute tour of Mr. Hoover's offices, introducing him to officials.

Although he has heard "all kinds of comments" about eroding morale in the FBI, Gray said he has seen "no outward manifestation of it. If I face that problem, that's one I'm going to have to work on quickly."

Gray said he is compiling "an objectives list — avenues of inquiry" concerning the bureau that he wants to go into. This week he plans to meet with 59 special agents in charge of FBI field offices, and to confer the following week "at a retreat outside of Washington" with the bureau's top officials. At that point, he hopes to have "a real shredding down of all the issues that I believe should be pursued."

Asked if he foresees significant changes in the FBI, Gray said: "I don't know that until I find the facts. And then I've got to make a judgment and evaluation and a decision."

As "areas of concern," Gray listed: the bureau's relationship with other domestic intelligence agencies; its role in organized crime; its role in the drug area, and its role in apprehending persons on its "most wanted" list.