

FBI Testimony Deal

Washington

The Justice Department is granting several FBI agents immunity from prosecution in exchange for their testimony against other agents and officials involved in allegedly illegal break-ins, it was disclosed yesterday.

Assistant Attorney General J. Stanley Pottinger confirmed through a spokesman that he is "in the process of authorizing immunity for some agents."

Pottinger refused to disclose how many agents are being offered a chance to escape prosecution by providing details of the burglaries to investigators and a federal grand jury in New York.

Pottinger is head of the civil right division, which is investigating whether FBI agents and officials violated the rights of American citizens by burglarizing their homes and offices during the past five years.

The probe could lead to the first

criminal charges in the bureau's history against FBI personnel in connection with their work.

The agents who have agreed to testify in exchange for immunity have direct knowledge of the burglary operation in the New York FBI office, department sources said.

The investigation is focusing on burglaries conducted against political parties in the New York area, including the Socialist Workers party, the sources said.

But investigators also are looking into break-ins conducted by FBI agents in a handful of other cities, said one knowledgeable source who declined to elaborate.

This source called the decision to grant immunity a routine development in this type of investigation.

Associated Press