

MITCHELL REPORTS FEWER WIRETAPS

Says Eavesdropping by the
Government Has Been
Reduced Under Nixon

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 14 —

Attorney General John N. Mitchell said today that the Government had reduced its use of telephone taps and electronic bugs since the Nixon Administration took office.

Mr. Mitchell's statement came as a surprise because he had earlier promised to make full use of the new wiretapping authority against organized crime that Congress approved last year but that Ramsey Clark, Mr. Mitchell's predecessor, had declined to use.

Mr. Mitchell had also argued in court that secret electronic surveillance of radical domestic organizations could be conducted under the broad immunity for "national security" investigations.

Hoover Figure Cut

Despite these policy positions, Mr. Mitchell told a news conference today, the use of eavesdropping methods is declining. He said several wiretaps had been installed under court warrants in criminal investigations and that one of the few taps had led directly to the seizure of a \$6-million heroin shipment to New York last April.

But a greater number of "national security" taps have been discounted, he said, because they were "not productive." He said that the total of authorized wiretaps and electronic eavesdropping devices currently in use was less than the 54 that were acknowledged in April by Edgar Hoover, director of

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the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. Mitchell denied flatly the suggestions last week by Senators Ralph W. Yarborough, Democrat of Texas and Carl T. Curtis, Republican of Nebraska, that many Congressional and executive branch phones were tapped.

"It would be unconceivable beyond any consideration," he said. "To place a tap on a member of Congress or on anyone else in Government."

Popular concern about wiretapping is exaggerated, he said. Individuals worried about the security of their own phones can "come to the Justice Department" to check their status, he suggested. "But any citizen of this United States who is not involved in some illegal activity has nothing to fear whatsoever," he said.

Foresees School Gains

Mr. Mitchell's news conference, his first since January, covered a wide range, as follows:

He insisted that the coordination of school desegregation by the Justice Department and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare would get faster and better results than the Johnson Administration had achieved. He said "the notion that delay was the purpose of our policy is erroneous."

He said that Abe Fortas, who resigned from the Supreme Court in May after disclosure of his connections with Louis Wolfson, the imprisoned financier, was never the subject of any official investigation. But he said an "obstruction of justice" investigation that involved Justice Fortas "has not been disposed of."

He said he had discussed "a very wide range" of candidates to succeed Mr. Fortas on the Court. He said the new Justice would be selected well before the start of the new Court term in October. Asked if he, himself, had been eliminated from consideration, Mr. Mitchell responded, "I certainly hope so."

He said the Justice Department was continuing a grand jury investigation in Detroit into the National Black Economic Development Conference, whose leader, James Forman, has demanded \$3-billion in "reparations" from the nation's Christian and Jewish churches. Mr. Mitchell refused to specify what crimes might be involved.

He said he expected "a number of indictments" from continuing investigations of campus unrest. Present laws against interstate travel to foment riots are "reasonably adequate" for the control of campus agitators, he believes, and the Government should not get further involved in university discipline.

The Justice Department filed today a new desegregation suit against 25 school districts in Alabama, and at the same time sought a court order against housing discrimination by Chicago area real estate dealers.

And in his news conference, Mr. Mitchell reiterated the Nixon

Administration's interest in civil rights enforcement in the North. He said he was seriously concerned about voting discrimination in New York and California.

"Both states have literacy tests, and in the black communities voter registration is way, way down," he said. "The statistics alone are presumptive evidence against the literacy tests."