

GAO Probes GOP Payoff To Student

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By Bob Woodward
and Carl Bernstein

Washington Post Staff Writers

The General Accounting Office will open an immediate investigation into the reported failure of President Nixon's re-election committee to disclose payments of campaign funds to a student who says he received \$150 a week to spy on radical groups.

Philip S. Hughes, director of the Federal Elections Office in the GAO, said yesterday that he will investigate the reported payments to Theodore F. Brill, 20, a George Washington University student who says he was a Nixon committee spy.

The GAO inquiry will include the questioning of former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, the chief Nixon fund-raiser and person responsible for reporting the expenditure of campaign funds as required by the 11-month-old campaign spending law, Hughes said.

Brill, chairman of the Young Republican organization at George Washington, told The Washington Post on

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Friday that he was paid for spying on a White House peace vigil with personal checks from a Nixon committee official.

In addition, Brill said that he later learned "it was a mistake that I got paid in check because there were supposed to be no records kept." Brill said he was paid \$150 a week for five weeks. This was in May and June, 1972, when the new campaign spending law required record keeping and the formal disclosure of all payments of more than \$100.

Yesterday, Hughes said, "I don't see how we can't investigate it, based on the report. We'll look into it at once." Hughes said that the report of payments to Brill is apparently the first disclosure of possibly illegal disbursements of Nixon committee funds for reasons not connected with the Watergate bugging. Hughes' statements were made in response to questions from a reporter yesterday.

Previously, the GAO cited the Nixon committee for an apparent violation of the law for maintaining a cash fund of \$350,000 in the safe of Stans. In January, the Nixon committee pleaded no contest to eight violations connected with this cash fund and the failure to report the payment of \$29,300 given to convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, the former Nixon committee finance counsel.

The Nixon committee was fined \$8,000, and by pleading no contest avoided having to account for how the money eventually was spent. Liddy received at least \$200,000 more in Nixon campaign funds, according to testimony in the Watergate trial, but that money was received prior to April 7, 1972, before the new campaign finance disclosure law took effect.

Hughes said that the report of undisclosed payments to Brill raises the possibility that the Nixon committee may have "had another cash fund or that they may have had more than the \$350,000 in Stans safe."

Federal sources have said that the amount in the fund in Stans' safe fluctuated and totaled more than \$750,000 at one time. The money, according to the sources, was used in part to finance an elaborate campaign of political espionage and sabotage against the Democratic presidential candidates. The Watergate bugging was just a part of that wider political spying operation, according to federal sources.

Craig Hillegass, a fellow student of Brill's at George Washington, has said that Brill had told him the purpose of spying on radical groups was in part "to create an embarrassment to the Democrats ... (because) any embarrassment to radical groups would be an embarrassment to liberal politics and Senator McGovern."

Brill denies this. However, it raises the possibility that his spying activities may have been a part of the Nixon committee's espionage campaign against Democrats. There is no indication whatsoever that Brill was involved in the Watergate bugging.

Hughes said that though the alleged payments to Brill were small—\$150 for five weeks—it will provide his GAO investigators with specific leads to find where the Nixon committee could have spent money from the cash fund for purposes other than the Watergate.

According to Hughes, the GAO has not made a complete audit of the entire receipts and expenditures of the Nixon committee.

In addition to chief fund-raiser Stans, Hughes said that the GAO would question Brill, George K. Gorton, the Nixon committee official who said he paid Brill, and Paul E. Barrick, the Nixon committee treasurer.

One effect of the Watergate bugging investigations has been the disclosure of the fund in Stans' safe. The cash fund apparently has become such a Republican embarrassment that more than \$650,000 of Nixon contributions have been returned to the donors for one reason or another.