

Watergate Grand Jury Is Receiving Requests From Private Citizens for Investigation.

By BEN A. FRANKLIN

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WASHINGTON, June 29.—The

foreman of the Watergate grand jury said today that the jury had received a flurry of requests from private citizens for Watergate-related investigations and indictments.

The foreman, Elmer B. Rogers, said in an interview that the complaining citizens felt they were getting a negative or non-committal response from the Watergate special prosecutors and had thus resorted to an obscure statutory right to approach the grand jury directly instead.

Few of the complaints received directly by the 23-member grand jury seem likely to be given more than cursory examination, and, as far as is known, none has yet resulted in an indictment.

According to Mr. Rogers, a 54-year-old civilian physicist with the Army here, the panel expects to complete its 18-month term and be dissolved Thursday. He would not say whether any indictments would be forthcoming before then.

The right of citizens to go directly to grand juries is a concept of English common law and the United States Code designed to endow grand juries as a "people's tribunal" against possible corruption or malfeasance in the judicial or prosecutorial offices.

Mr. Rogers said there had been "A great many" direct communications to the jury and since published reports three weeks ago that a citizens action group in suburban Virginia had succeeded, after years of inaction by Federal prosecutors

on their complaints, in presenting a full day of sworn testimony about alleged criminal acts directly to the grand jury. The Watergate prosecutor's office had rejected the citizens' presentation in earlier interviews.

Apparently not all the citizens who have written to the grand jury or its foreman have been successful. Explaining that Section 1504 of Title 18 of the United States Code allows direct communication with and private requests to Julian C. Holmes, sought to persuade the grand jury to indict a dozen top Federal law enforcement officials, including Attorney General Edward H. Levi and the current Watergate prosecution chief, Henry S. Ruth.

The grand jury foreman would not say how many requests had been honored by inaction by Federal prosecutors

It is known, however, that the Virginia group pursued this route with Mr. Rogers and received the Watergate grand jury's invitation to appear on June 12.

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Holmes grand jury appearance, others began to come forward with appeals to present evidence.

One request that Mr. Rogers acknowledged — because the complaining citizen had already made public his letter to the foreman—came from John J. Harter, a career foreign service officer at the State Department who had he had also failed to interest the Watergate prosecutors in his allegations.

Mr. Harter said in an interview that he had delivered to the foreman at his home here a three-page letter on June 10 requesting a grand jury investigation of William B. Macomber Jr., a former Deputy Under Secretary of State who is now the United States Ambassador to Turkey. The letter sets forth complaints and allegations about Mr. Macomber's activities as the former top management executive of the State Department that have largely been aired before—that during the Nixon Administration he authorized wiretaps of the telephone of State Department employees for example, Mr. Harter told the grand jury in his letter that the taps were illegal.

Mr. Harter said that he had followed his letter with a long telephone call and a personal interview with Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers declined to say whether the grand jury had voted to summon Mr. Harter for further explanations of his complaint. The foreman would say only that "as time permits I am sending him a receipt for the communication."