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GAO Report 350

WASHINGTON AP - The Justice Department Monday criticized the Government Accounting Office for making public detailed information on campaign expenditures by The Committee to Re-Elect the President before giving the report to the department.

"It is of particular concern to the department," a spokesman said, "that GAO decided to release detailed information on a case which it sent to the department for possible criminal prosecution.

"Discloses of this nature run counter to normal investigative procedures and may prejudice a potential defendant's right to a fair trial."

The GAO report was referred to the department's criminal division for review and "appropriate action," the spokesman said.

Jean Westwood, Democratic National Committee chairwoman, said the report, which cites "apparent and possible" violations of campaign financing laws in President Nixon's re-election effort, "leaves great questions unanswered."

"The GAO's report adds to what was already known, a new huge sum, \$350,000 in cash, whose origins are said to be untraceable and which some Republican finance officials say was left over from the 1968 campaign," she said.

"It is perfectly clear that the GAO was unable to do more than scratch the surface of this strange and scandalous business. What we now have is the bare outlines of the largest and possibly the most corrupt set of financial dealings in the history of American presidential politics."

Maurice Stans, head of Nixon's finance committee, Sunday said the GAO report was an inaccurate, hurry-up job done mostly because of pressure from Democrats.

"The report unfortunately contains serious misrepresentations of fact and is so loosely drawn as to raise grave questions regarding its obvious hurried and premature release," Stans said.

"It should be noted," the Justice Department spokesman said, "that GAO, for whatever reason, deviated from its past practice by making public its report."

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