

# Mitchell's Bugging Denial

## --'No Advance Knowledge'

### Washington

John N. Mitchell swore yesterday he had 'no advance knowledge' of the alleged bugging of Democratic headquarters that investigators have linked to the Nixon re-election campaign he headed at the time.

While the former attorney general denied his own involvement in the incident, the lawyer for five men accused in the case went to court to try to block Democrats from gathering any more evidence from Mitchell or anyone else in a related \$1 million civil damage suit.

The new legal maneuverings cut short Mitchell's scheduled session with Democratic lawyers, at which he was to have made a formal, sworn deposition about his role — if any — in the affair.

Emerging just 28 minutes after he went into the office of Democratic party lawyer Edward Bennett Williams, Mitchell told reporters the questioning "didn't get to the point" of whether he knew about the affair beforehand.

"But I can swear now that I had no advance knowledge," he said.

And since he "was not connected" with the financial side of President Nixon's campaign, he said, he didn't know why or how five checks totaling \$114,000 in-

tended for the campaign war chest wound up in the Miami bank account of one of the bugging suspects, ex-CIA agent Bernard L. Barker.

The five were arrested at 2:30 a.m. June 17 in the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the posh Watergate Apartment-hotel complex here. Police said they had with them electronic eavesdropping and photographic equipment.

### LINKS

Police and other official sources since then have reported finding numerous links between the Watergate suspects — particularly Barker — and the White House or the Nixon campaign. Most prominently mentioned have been G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, former White House staffers who have since been fired.

Mitchell himself left the campaign two weeks after the "Watergate caper," but has denied the affair had anything to do with his departure. He told reporters again yesterday that "the only reason" he stepped down was to spend more time with his family.

A Federal Grand Jury is investigating the Watergate incident and indictments are expected soon. Mr. Nixon and his top lieutenants have predicted no key Republicans will be named.

Mitchell had been summoned to Williams' office to

make a formal factual deposition in a related \$1 million civil damage suit Democrats have filed against the suspects, alleging invasion of privacy and violation of civil rights laws.

But shortly before he was to arrive, New York lawyer Henry B. Rothblatt, who is representing the Watergate five, asked U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey to block the taking of depositions. Richey was reported to be on vacation and it was not known immediately when he might act on the request.

### TRIAL

Rothblatt, who represented Colonel Oran K. Henderson in his My Lai massacre trial, told reporters that the publicity surrounding the Watergate cases had "completely destroyed" his clients' chance for a fair trial.

"In the public mind right now, I represent five guilty men," he said.

Similar fears were expressed by Mitchell when he was asked if he knew who was behind the reputed bugging attempt.

"If I did, I certainly wouldn't be stating it for the press because criminal proceedings are going on," he said. "These people are entitled to their constitutional rights."

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