

Mitchell Shrugs at Impact of Break-In

Washington

President Nixon's reelection campaign won't be hurt by the furor over last June's break-in and bugging of Democratic party offices, John Mitchell said yesterday.

The former Nixon campaign chief spokes to newsmen after completing one hour and 45 minutes of secret testimony in the Democrats' \$1 million lawsuit over the June 17 incident.

Five men, two of them with links to the President's campaign staff, were arrested that night with electronic eavesdropping gear, photographic equipment and rubber surgical gloves inside the Democrats' offices at the Watergate Hotel. Government investigators have since traced \$114,000 in one of the arrested men's bank account back to Mr. Nixon's campaign organization.

"I don't believe it's hurting the President's campaign," Mitchell said.

The former attorney gen-

eral called it a "ridiculous caper" that newsmen have "blown out of all proportion."

The President's top campaign leaders aren't responsible he said.

"If people act without authority, then there is clearly no responsibility of the people in command and control," he said.

Mitchell wouldn't discuss his testimony because of a court secrecy order, but said he had answered all questions asked by the Democrats' lawyer in the case, Edward Bennett Williams.

Last Friday Mitchell had refused to answer questions because Henry B. Rothblatt, attorney for the arrested men, had asked the court to halt any further testimony in the case. Saturday federal judge Charles R. Richey temporarily blocked Williams from questioning the five arrested men, but allowed him to go ahead with taking depositions from Mitchell and others not facing criminal charges in the case.

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