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Watergate Case 380

WASHINGTON AP - The Justice Department has finished its investigation of the Watergate case without implicating any present officials of either the White House or President Nixon's re-election campaign committee, The Washington Post reported today. The newspaper said sources close to the investigation also said that a federal grand jury is expected within 10 days to hand down indictments that will be confined to suspects actively involved in the break-in.

The Miami Herald said today it has learned that Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., is prepared to hold open hearings of his Senate Judiciary subcommittee on the break-in if he believes the Nixon administration is stalling civil court action on the Watergate case.

The Herald's Washington bureau reported that Kennedy was keeping in close touch with the progress of the investigations and with former Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien, who is directing Sen. George McGovern's presidential campaign.

Kennedy is said to feel that his entry into the case while court cases are pending would be improper and viewed as "a purely political event," by the public, the Herald said.

But if the court cases are temporarily submerged, the Herald said, Kennedy is inclined to call his Judiciary subcommittee into session to investigate the Watergate affair, including taking testimony from former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and former secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans.

The case goes back to June 17, when five men-including two with close ties to the Committee for the Re-Election of President Nixon-were arrested inside the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate Hotel complex in Washington. Eavesdropping and photographic equipment was seized by police.

Democrats, including presidential candidate George McGovern, have brought up the case in their campaign to put Nixon out of the White House, but Republicans have denied any responsibility for the break-in and apparent bugging attempt.

The Post reported federal sources said that throughout the inquiry investigators and prosecutors had strict instructions from Justice Department officials and FBI Director L. Patrick Gray not to consider possible violations of campaign fund reporting laws.

A spokesman for the FBI declined Friday to comment on any aspect of the Watergate investigation.

According to persons familiar with the investigation, the White House received regular reports on the progress of the probe, the paper said. It added that the persons said the White House determined shortly after the Republican National Convention there was no evidence to indict present administration officials or current employees of the re-election committee.

The FBI and the grand jury conducted aggressive inquiries within the narrow framework of the investigation, the Post related various sources said.

However, the newspaper quoted persons close to the case as saying that agents and their supervisors were frustrated by a central problem from the beginning of the investigation to the end. They said none of the persons directly implicated in the case would talk about the break-in or in any way implicate anyone else.

Because FBI agents had no insider's account of the case, they were not able to learn positively the exact objective of the break-in, the Post said.

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