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# Watergate May Remain A Mystery

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MYRTLE BEACH, S.C., Sep. 23—The American public may never learn the motivation of the men charged with bugging Democratic headquarters at the Watergate, Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen has told federal prosecutors at a national conference here.

Petersen, the chief of the Justice Department's criminal division who directed the federal investigation of the Watergate affair, insisted that the three-month probe has not revealed the true reasons for the incident or the identity of persons who may have been behind it.

His remarks came in response to questions raised by U.S. attorneys from around the country during seminars at this Atlantic Coast resort.

Petersen frankly told his questioners that he expects "the jail doors will close" behind the seven men now charged with the break-in be-

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# Bugging Remains Mystery, Aide Says

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fore they ever reveal further details of the affair.

The public and press, and even some Justice Department employees, were barred from most of the meetings here—billed as gripe sessions and briefings for the regional federal law enforcement officials. But Petersen today confirmed his comments about the Watergate.

They contrasted with the earlier public statements of other Nixon administration officials, who have said either that the indictment returned 10 days ago in Washington revealed the full Watergate story or that further significant details would come out during the trial.

Petersen, a career Justice Department lawyer who now holds a political appointment as assistant attorney general, reiterated today his confidence that the FBI and grand jury investigations of the Watergate incident had been thorough and left no stones unturned.

Echoing the statements of Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, he said that criticism of the Watergate investigation by Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern and others is politically motivated.

He conceded, however, that the indictment in the case might just as well have been returned earlier, because the last six weeks of the investigation had provided nothing new. Among seven men named in the indictment are two former White House aides—E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy—who subsequently worked for the Committee for the Re-election of the President—and James W. McCord, former security chief for the President's re-election committee.

During the final stages of the probe, Petersen said, the government found itself following false leads.

The Watergate controversy was hardly mentioned, publicly or privately, during the two-day annual conference of U.S. attorneys, all but a few of them political appointees with impeccable Republican credentials.

When it did come up in the seminars, it was usually in a joking way or in the form of technical questions by the federal prosecutors about the investigation.

Many of the U.S. attorneys, talking with their supervisors from Washington and with reporters, confirmed the widespread impression that the Watergate affair has not caught on as an election-year issue in their home states.

As one southerner put it, "Back home, most people expect both parties to do this spying on each other. The only thing that interests them is why these people were stupid enough to get caught."

Kleindienst and most of his deputies and staff returned to Washington today in the same Air Force jet that brought them here Thursday for the first such annual conference of U.S. attorneys to be held outside Washington.

The Attorney General spent much of his time here in private sessions with regional prosecutors handling sensitive cases or complaining of a lack of support in their work from other government agencies.

In the meantime, the U.S. attorneys were briefed on the latest Justice Department wiretap disclosure policies, ambitious new plans for combating drug abuse, and lawsuits against violators of the federal wage-and-price freeze.

Among the policies urged on the U.S. attorneys were:

- An intensive effort, with the cooperation of local authorities across the country, to combat airplane hijacking with the presence of "someone in uniform" at all 331 domestic airports whenever a commercial airliner is scheduled to take off.

- A new push to persuade federal judges to send income tax evaders and other persons convicted of so-called white-collar crimes to jail at least for a short period of time.

Assistant Attorney General Scott P. Crampton, chief of the Justice Department's tax division, told the prosecutors that only through jail sentences could the federal government hope to combat tax frauds effectively.