

The Watergate Bugging Case

Why the FBI Didn't Quiz Martha

Washington

The FBI wanted to interview Martha Mitchell about the Watergate bugging case but was denied permission by her husband, John, the former attorney general and campaign chairman of President Nixon, L. Patrick Gray III said yesterday.

Asked by Senator Birch Bayh (Dem-Ind.) if it was a customary procedure in a criminal case for the FBI to permit a husband to refuse permission for his wife to be interviewed, Gray replied:

"The people in the FBI have an innate sense of decency, of courtesy. This man was a former attorney general. You can't classify it as a normal procedure. It was a matter of decency, dignity and courtesy."

Gray also told senators examining his credentials to be permanent FBI director that Robert Mardian, a top aide in the Nixon re-election committee, refused to be interviewed by the FBI about alleged destruction of documents at Republican headquarters.

The 56-year-old Gray repeated again that H. R. Haldeman, White House chief of staff, was not interviewed by the FBI in connection with the Watergate investigation because there was no evidence that he had anything to do with it.

Gray said the FBI, on the recommendation of agents

assigned to the case, attempted to interview Mrs. Mitchell about the Watergate bugging because of her comments in the press.

During a highly publicized incident last June, shortly after the Watergate case, Mrs. Mitchell said she would write a book and give all the facts on the bugging case which took place in the hotel-office building in which she lived.

"We endeavored to interview her," Gray said, "but Mr. Mitchell said the stories in the press were not true and we were not going to interview Mrs. Mitchell and that was that."

His remarks came during the second day of his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Gray has been acting FBI director since J. Edgar Hoover's death last May.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) raised the Time magazine story which said that two years ago, under orders from the White House, the FBI tapped the telephone of six or seven newsmen and a number of White House aides in an effort to determine how information was being leaked to the press.

Gray said he talked about the alleged bugging with John Hushen, director of public information at the Justice Department, but did not discuss it with anyone else in the department or at the White House.

Kennedy then asked a series of questions which indicated he did not believe that Gray had investigated the matter very thoroughly, asking in an almost incredulous voice "that is the sole extent of your investigation?"

"Yes," replied Gray.

"This is a crime. This is a serious allegation. A charge of a crime," Kennedy said.

"I agree with you, senator, if it had taken place," said Gray, adding that the proper place to make the charges was the U.S. attorney's office.

Associated Press

The Very Talky People of Jersey

Newark

New Jersey residents are the gabbiest people in the world.

In an annual report released yesterday, New Jersey Bell Telephone said the average New Jersey resident made 1100 calls last year, the highest average in the world.

Associated Press



JOHN MITCHELL
He said no



L. PATRICK GRAY
'A matter of decency'



MARTHA MITCHELL
She talked of a book

* Mitchell resigned as Attorney General 15 Feb 72, and as head of re-election committee 1 Jul 72.