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GAO Says Nixon Unit Placed an Ad Illegally

Washington

The General Accounting Office accused President Nixon's campaign committee yesterday of violating federal law when it ran an advertisement in the New York Times last November in support of Mr. Nixon's decision to mine Haiphong harbor.

The GAO's office of federal elections referred the matter to the Justice Department for further investigation and possible legal action.

The GAO said in a report that although the ad was paid for by the Committee to Re-Elect the President, it did not mention the committee or list the names of its officials as required under federal campaign laws.

"Although we have not determined which individual involved may be considered liable, we recommend that this matter be referred to the attorney general for further investigation and action," said Phillip S. Hughes, director of the GAO's elections office.

The report said that Charles W. Colson, a special counsel to Mr. Nixon who resigned earlier this year, "informed us that he reviewed the draft (of the ad) and probably made changes in it."

The full-page ad, entitled "The People vs. the New York Times," which ran in the newspaper's November 17 issue, rebutted a Times editorial that criticized Mr. Nixon's decision to mine Haiphong.

The GAO report quoted officials of the November Group, a unit created by the campaign committee to handle advertising, as saying

"the re-election committee officials did not want either the name of the committee or the names of its officers shown in the ad."

The GAO investigation found that seven of the names listed in the ad as sponsors were obtained from personal friends and relatives of the campaign organization's staff.

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