

FBI seals Cox's office, seizes

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WASHINGTON — "I never thought I'd see the day when the FBI would tell me I can't even take a love letter from my wife out of my office."

That was the angry and emotional reaction of Henry Ruth, deputy Watergate special prosecutor, after the FBI seized the special prosecution's Watergate files Saturday night.

Shortly after President Nixon fired Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, FBI director Clarence Kelley, on orders from the White House, sent a half dozen agents to Cox's office five blocks from the White House to make sure that none of the prosecution material — not even personal belongings of staff members — was removed.

Ruth rushed to his office after a telephone call from Cox, who "told me the special prosecution office had been abolished."

A security guard stopped him in the lobby.

"He told me I was no longer allowed in the building," Ruth later told reporters at an emotional press conference.

"I told him I was the deputy special prosecutor and he said I wasn't supposed to be allowed in the building," Ruth continued. "I told him I wanted to get some personal belongings out of my office and he allowed me to go up to the ninth floor."

Ruth said FBI agents inside the special prosecution office told him he couldn't even take his personal belongings from the building.

"Emotions take over when you think that this kind of thing can happen in a democracy," Ruth said. "We have been abolished. I can't think through what this means to the country. We

have been abolished by executive fiat without any consultation with the other branches of government."

"This is not Seven Days in May but one day in October," Ruth said, nervously crushing his knuckles.

Most of the other young attorneys on Cox's prosecution team rushed to the office after they got the news that Cox had been fired by the President. They came dressed in levis, tennis shoes, T-shirts, or whatever they happened to be wearing when the word came.

One was Tom McBride, an assistant prosecutor in charge of campaign financing and political favoritism. He got to his office at 9:05 p.m.



Atty. Henry Ruth

A few minutes later he came out and told reporters:

"They (FBI agents) are impeding our operations."

Asked how, McBride replied, "When you can't get into your office and files your operations are being impeded."

On the advice of his official spokesman, James Doyle, Cox stayed away from the office last night.

Doyle said Cox was remaining at his rented house in Georgetown awaiting official notification of his dismissal.

"The White House called here and asked for his (Cox's) address," Ruth said. "As of now, nobody has received any official report on our status."

"It's a hell of a note when the lawyers who are supposed to be prosecuting this case are being frisked like we're thieves," said one young staff lawyer bitterly.

A spokesman for the prosecutor's office said that as the confrontation between Cox and the President approached a climax, the heads of the task forces copied their prosecutive memoranda and took the copies home.

He said the memoranda were generalized statements of the status of the various cases under investigation.

He said the only other material removed from the office were the original copies of the letters that Cox released earlier in the day.

He said the most of the material gathered by the staff in its investigations had not yet been presented to grand juries. He described it as "an enormous amount."

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