

FBI Agents Seal Off Cox Office

By Herbert Denton
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At least six FBI agents took over and sealed off the two floors of offices last night of Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox in a private office building at 1425 K Street NW.

Members of Cox' staff, who had returned to the offices after hearing the news that Cox had been fired, said they were stopped by the federal agents from taking from the offices any files, except personal papers not connected with the Cox investigations.

The FBI agents "are impeding our operations right now," Tom McBride, associate special prosecutor in charge of the task force on campaign financing, said as he walked out of the office.

"When you can't get into your offices and your files, then your operations are being impeded," McBride said.

The FBI agents arrived shortly after 9 p.m. and one of them told reporters, "We're from the FBI. We're sealing off the area."

The agents had walked in on more than 20 lawyers on Cox' staff, most of them dressed casually on what was their day off. The lawyers told

about what to do with their files following the firing of Cox and they were waiting for Cox to come with instructions.

Some members of the staff knew some of the FBI agents and when they arrived, one lawyer said, "Hey, what are you doing? Are you taking over the place?"

"Yes," one of the FBI agents answered, and other agents could be heard telling the lawyers that they could take only "fully personal papers" from the offices.

"They won't even let me take a pencil out," complained one lawyer who would not give his name to reporters as he left the building.

The Cox offices had been guarded by security police and protected by a complicated electric lock system and closed circuit television cameras. Cox had instructed his staff about the importance of maintaining security for their files.

When asked about the authority for the FBI seizure of Cox's offices and files last night, John W. Hushen, the official Justice Department spokesman, said, "That's the first I've heard of it."

FBI Director Clarence Kelly could not be reached for comment.

Senate select Watergate committee sources said that for the past two days there had been some discussion about the committee's staff receiving files from Cox's staff in the event that Cox was fired. When told last night of the sealing of the files by the FBI, a source high on the committee staff muttered an angry expletive.