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Senate Panel Will Expand Spying Probe

Reuter

Senate investigators yesterday decided to expand their probe into a alleged military spy ring in the White House after White House attorney J. Fred Buzhardt testified he was not sure who rejected prosecuting a Navy admiral and his aide accused of pilfering documents.

Buzhardt, who was the Pentagon's general counsel at the time of the leaks in 1970 and 1971, said former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird told him the Nixon administration decided against legal action.

But Buzhardt, speaking to reporters after testifying at a closed-door Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, said he was not sure who made the decision.

The committee previously has received testimony from Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in which they suggested that former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman or Laird were involved in the decision. The New York Times has said sources close to the investigation believe President Nixon made the decision.

Buzhardt said he understood that the decision was not made on national security grounds alone, although this was one of the factors. He said he felt that the case against Navy Yeoman 1c Charles Redford was not prosecutable on the evidence.

But he said there was no basis to substantiate suggestions that the case was dropped because the administration at the same time was prosecuting Daniel Ellsberg for leaking the Pentagon Papers and feared embarrassment if it were disclosed that military officials at the White House were passing documents to top Pentagon officials.