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FBI Chief Lead 250

By FRANK CORMIER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON AP - President Nixon sidestepped a possible election-year battle over replacing J. Edgar Hoover by naming an old friend and aide to be acting FBI director Wednesday.

The White House said Asst. Atty. Gen. L. Patrick Gray III will serve at least until after the Nov. 7 balloting. Nixon was described as anxious to keep the directorship of the Federal Bureau of Investigation out of partisan politics.

As an acting appointee, Gray will not be subject to Senate confirmation which would be required for a regular appointment.

Hoover, FBI chief for 48 years, died Tuesday.

In choosing Gray, the President bypassed a number of Hoover aides to select a Navy-educated lawyer with no law-enforcement experience.

A retired Navy captain, Gray served eight years as special assistant to the then Vice President Nixon during the Eisenhower administration.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Nixon chose him because he is a man in whom the President places "implicit personal confidence."

Ziegler said Gray might yet be nominated to be the regular FBI director if Nixon wins re-election. Should the President be defeated, Ziegler said, the choice would be left to his successor.

Gray will continue to serve as assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Division. But his pending nomination to be deputy attorney general, the number two post in the department, will be withdrawn.

Ziegler said Nixon will not nominate a successor to Hoover until after Nov. 7 because he does not want the choice of a Hoover successor "considered in the middle of an election year," when it might become the subject of "partisan debate."

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