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ARCHIVES | 1992 Barr Rejects Request for Theft Inquiry

By NEIL A. LEWIS OCT. 14, 1992

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Justice Dept. Investigating F.B.I. Chie



Attorney General William P. Barr

request to name an independent

prosecutor to investigate charges

Administration stole a computer

company's software program to

It was the second time in recent

saying the Justice Department

could investigate accusations of

criminal conduct even though they

involved officials in the Reagan and

Bush Administrations. Last August

prosecutor to investigate charges

he refused to name a special

that the Bush Administration

illegally helped Iraq before the

Persian Gulf war and then tried to

officials in the Reagan

benefit their friends.

that high-level Justice Department

today turned down a Congressional

months that the Attorney General has refused Congressional requests to name an independent counsel,

cover it up.

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In the new case, Mr. Barr was asked last month by the House Judiciary Committee to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the possible theft of the computer program as well as charges that two former Attorneys General, Edwin Meese 3d and Dick Thornburgh, had blocked earlier inquiries into the affair. The case concerns Inslaw, a small Washington-based computer company that contracted with the Justice Department in 1982 to provide a software program called

Promis to keep track of all the

Bankruptcy

Federal criminal cases being tried

around the country. Disputes and

The department withheld payment

company. Inslaw eventually went

bankrupt; it charged in court that

senior officials in the department

stole the program and gave it their

ADVERTISEMENT

Whatever the

destination

from Inslaw after a series of

contractual disputes with the

friends to sell abroad.

All 21 Democratic members of the **Judiciary Committee voted last** month to ask Mr. Barr to name a special counsel in the Inslaw affair. Representative Jack Brooks, the Texas Democrat who is chairman of the Judiciary Committee, attacked Mr. Barr's action on the Inslaw matter today, saying that it was "absolutely the worst choice imaginable for this Department of Justice to make at a time when the public trust in the agency has been severely shaken as a result of its handling of the Iraq inquiry."

In rejecting the committee's

appointment of independent

does not require him to name a

special prosecutor because there

are no charges involving any of a

in the law. Discretionary Power

Even if the allegations do not

concern that specific group of

Cited

group of officials specifically listed

the law providing for the

request, Mr. Barr, an opponent of

prosecutors, said today that the law

officials, the law gives the Attorney Genaral the discretion to name an independent counsel if he determines that the investigation would result in a conflict of interest. But Mr. Barr said he did not believe such a conflict existed. The law providing for the appointment of independent prosecutors, which was created as a

result of the Watergate scandal,

expires at the end of this year. Congress failed to have the law renewed this year. Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who represented the owners of Inslaw, brought suit in Federal bankruptcy court against the Justice Department. A bankruptcy judge ruled that the department used "trickery and fraud and deceit" to steal Inslaw's program, but an appeals court threw out the judgment. The Supreme Court has refused to consider the case.

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