HOME SEARCHED — Investigators and police officers searched Col. James H. Watkins home at 2800 block of Dolfield on June 13. More than 50 reels of tape were confiscated as part of a long-running grand jury investigation of police corruption.

AFRO Photo by Robin McGinty

—Watkins indicted

(Continued from Page 1)

Col. Watkins arrived at the court house on the morning of June 14, along with his wife, Mrs. Goldie Watkins and sat in the front row behind his attorneys, George L. Russell, Kenneth L. Thompson and A. Samuel Peregoff.

Then the state's attorney's office dropped its bomb. Watkins showed no emotion when Judge Robert L. Karwacki opened the 10 separate sealed indictments containing 16 charges.

When the smoke had cleared, Watkins alone, was charged. No one else. No co-conspirants. No accomplices. Just one man, James H. Watkins, a distinguished looking man of military-bearing.

Watkins thus becomes the second high ranking Baltimore black police officer to be indicted within 5 years.

Retired Western District Police Captain Dennis P. Mello was charged in December 1973 with participating in an illegal gambling operation.

Mello's three - week "nightmare" trial ended in June 1974, when he was finally acquitted.

The question now abroad is that after so much prior intensive investigation of Watkins, what finally led the State's Attorney's office and the grand jury to believe that they had enough evidence to prosecute Watkins?

The indictments charge Col. Watkins with nonfeasance in Jan. 1963 for failing to report convicted dope lord Charles Burman's unlawful activities to the Police Department.

Further, between 1963 and 1976, Watkins is accused of demanding a $15,000 bribe from Burman and failing to report Burman's drug activities to the police.

Watkins is charged with non-feasance. From Oct. 1, 1967 and March 21, 1968, another charge states, Watkins extorted $1,800 from Rufus Tate, a suspected drug dealer.

Also, between, October 1967 and March 1968, Watkins is charged with receiving a $1,800 bribe from Tate and with failing to report his suspected drug activities or have him arrested.

The indictments also charge Watkins with giving $300 to Delores Bailey, to make false accusations to the Internal Investigation Division of the Police Department, against Detective Charles Smoot, a member of the force, and to say that he (Smoot) had taken a bribe.

The colonel is also charged with extortion during the same period by threatening to accuse Mr. Tate of serious narcotics charged in order to obtain the $1,800.

Watkins is charged with submitting a false report on July 1, 1977 to Deputy Commissioner C. Jared Clauser accusing Detective Charles Smoot and Detective Richard Broynak of trying to force Avon "Apex" Simmons an informant, to wear electronic equipment in an effort to manufacture evidence of alleged wrong doing by Col. Watkins.

On the street, those familiar with the ways of cops and crooks have put it this way, "Who snitched on Col. Watkins?"

The name of Charles Burman figures prominently in the presentment against Watkins.

The links between Burman and Watkins, as evidenced in these indictments are very important. The AFRO has learned that Burman testified before the grand jury that was probing Watkins.

Before Burman's testimony, his two sons were charged, in 1974, with distribution of heroin and conspiracy to violate state narcotic laws.

Court records state their 1974 charges were recently placed on an inactive docket. Burman's sons remain free and no legal proceedings presently confront them.

The second key witness for or against Watkins cannot be known until evidence unfolds in the courtroom.

The special grand jury's investigation began following the death of dope kingpin Elijah "Ditty Wo" Davis, 28, on Sept. 13, 1977.

He was gunned down by hit men a few hours after his teenage girlfriend told Rep. Parren J. Mitchell and the deputy attorney general that Davis had been paying off a police officer for protection.

Henry "Genie Boy" Richardson, 27, was arrested and charged with killing Davis.

Some of the principals in this latest law enforcement tragedy have been associated with other controversies surrounding police.

Watkins' counselor George L. Russell Jr. testified in favor of the reappointment of Commissioner Donald Pomerleau for another six-year term before the City Council executive nominations committee on June 6. Several years ago Russell was counsel for Pomerleau at legislative hearings on the commissioner's conduct of office.

John Denholm, who led the prosecution of this case, is a former narcotics detective with the Police Department. When he served on the force, he worked with Det. Charles Smoot, the detective about whom Watkins is charged with nonfeasance. Smoot and Denholm are white.

State's Attorney William A. Swisher, who is seeking re-election has stayed in the background but his Deputy State's Attorney Mrs. Mary Ann Willin assisted Denholm in bringing in the indictments against Watkins.

The execution of Elijah "Ditty Wo" has been a puzzle.

Hopefully, at the end of this trial the public will at least learn which police officer Elijah Davis was actually paying off.

Also, answers as to why Davis was killed may surface. The question of why charges against Burman's sons were placed on an inactive docket may also be aired.

Col. Watkins is scheduled to appear in court July 17 before Criminal Court Judge Paul A. Dorf for arraignment. He has voluntarily accepted his suspension without pay pending the outcome of his trial.

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Manpower shortages, low pay blamed

Port conditions 'unsafe'

Manpower shortages and low wages have jeopardized safety conditions at state Port Administration terminals, according to crane operators testifying before a joint legislative committee on the port of Maryland.

The hearing, called to discuss what Del. Dennis McCoy, D - Baltimore, has called a crisis situation, investigated reports of unsafe crane operating conditions.

Robert Cos, president of Local 2801 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and a crane operator, said the basic problem was a shortage of manpower and low wages.

"The problem lies with manpower, and our manpower problem is that our salary is not competitive with outside industry," he said.

"We are not going to get a crane operator from Bethlehem Steel or Locust Point to come in and run a crane for $5.43 an hour when he's making $9 an hour on the outside," Cos said.

Cos said his men work 16 hours a day, seven days a week without a day off and those who refuse to work overtime are terminated

Test scores improving ...or are they?

What is the deal on the reading and math skill test scores?

Last week school officials reported latest test results showed Baltimore school students improved their reading and math skills for the second consecutive year.

Yet state school officials reported May 26 that city school students showed no improvement in any of the skills tests.

The city test scores, released last Friday, June 9, by Dr. John L. Crew, show a significant growth rate in the scores given last October.

City School Superintendent John Crew said the results indicate a reversal in a decade-long decline in test scores but that they are still below the national levels in grade equivalencies.

"I don't want to mislead anyone," Crew said then. "I'm not happy at where we are, but I'm happy at the direction in which we are going."

According to the test results, in reading students picked up theequivant of as much as 10 months of schooling terms of the test results beetween October and May.

Mathematics scores also improved, ranging from equivalents of five months of schooling among third grade students to 10 months in grade six.

Crew also said raw test scores improved 10 percent.

The third major area of improvement was in closing the difference in all grades between the Baltimore and the national average.

Crew said reading improvements were found in every grade level from three to 11 except seven and nine, where he said the decline was "just arrested."

But the state's results in reading released last May given to grades seven, nine and 11 showed that the test scores show that these scores were almost identical to the year before.

Although the state's tests are designed to test real life skills and the city's test are based on the Iowa and California Tests of Basic Skills and Achievement, questions are flying as to which test scores to believe.

Robert Armacost, the deputy superintendent who oversees the testing programs, contends that the school system is better suited to teach academic skills than it is in teaching real like skills.

He also claims that it is possible that the reading skills are improving more meaning fully in elementary schools than in the secondary level for which the state tests.

Armacost and other educators do admit problems with fall-spring comparisons especially when it deals with the summer fall off in achievement.

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