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Federal Attorney Asked to Resign Because of Intelligence Disclosure

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WASHINGTON, April 1—Justice Department officials said today that a United States Attorney in San Diego had been asked to resign. The request came a week after he disclosed that the Central Intelligence Agency had played a role in blocking prosecution of a former Mexican Government official in a major criminal case.

The officials reported that William H. Kennedy, appointed as United States Attorney by President Reagan last year, was asked to resign on Wednesday.

It was not known whether Mr. Kennedy had acceded to the request. Staff members in his office had no response to the report of his pending ouster, and he did not return telephone calls requesting his comment.

Last week, in a newspaper interview, Mr. Kennedy disclosed that the Justice Department had blocked prosecution of the former chief of Mexico's national police in an \$8 million stolen car case after the C.I.A. advised that the Mexi-

can was a key intelligence source in Central America.

Mr. Kennedy was summoned to Washington for meetings with senior department officials Monday and was reprimanded for making the disclosure. Initially, department officials indicated Mr. Kennedy would be permitted to keep his job, but they said they later decided his comments violated Government rules prohibiting the release of grand jury information.

In addition, officials said they felt that accepting Mr. Kennedy's conduct might suggest that the Reagan Administration was not serious about pending legislation that would make it a Federal crime to disclose the identities of intelligence agents working for the United States. The legislation, known as the Intelligence Identities Protection Act, has been approved by both the House and Senate and is expected to become law

once final bills sent to Mr. Reagan.

In an interview published by The San Diego Union, Mr. Kennedy asserted that since last November the Justice Department has withheld approval to indict Miguel Nassar Haro, the former head of the Mexico's Directorate of Federal Security, because the C.I.A. had told the department that Mr. Nassar was its "most important source in Mexico and Central America."

Senior Reagan Administration officials said Mr. Nassar's connections with the C.I.A. were considered particularly sensitive because the intelligence information he provided involved the activities of guerrilla leaders from El Salvador and Guatemala.

They said that under Mr. Nassar's direction, the Mexican national police had conducted joint intelligence-gathering operations with the C.I.A. and passed on sensitive information about Soviet and Cuban assistance of guerrilla forces in El Salvador. According to these officials, Mr. Nassar, who left his police job in January and whose whereabouts are unknown, was a key source of some of the information used by the Administration to justify its assertions of outside interference in El Salvador.

Justice Department officials said that evidence implicating Mr. Nassar in the stolen car case first appeared last year after a Federal grand jury in San Diego indicted 28 Mexicans on charges of stealing almost 600 cars in southern California and transporting them to Mexico to be sold at inflated prices. Fourteen of the suspects were arrested when they entered the United States last fall and were later convicted.

Department officials said two of the defendants implicated Mr. Nassar in their testimony.