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**Illegal sweep at Ryan office**

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Staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD-A top aide to Gov. Ryan had state workers with state equipment sweep Ryan's campaign office for electronic bugs during his 1994 re-election bid for secretary of state, the Chicago Sun-Times has learned.

Sources say the illegal sweep was authorized a month before the fall election that year by Ryan's former inspector general and longtime friend, Dean Bauer. Last week, Bauer pleaded guilty to obstructing justice in the government's ongoing probe of corruption in the secretary of state's office.

Bauer ordered his top aide, Elwyn Tatro, and investigator Russell Sonneveld to perform the sweep on state time at the $ 2,000-a-month campaign office Ryan rented from the village of Rosemont, sources confirmed.

The sweep lasted roughly a half day and turned up no evidence of electronic listening devices in the office. It is not clear whether Bauer suspected government phone wiretaps or bugs planted by Ryan's political enemies.

Either way, Illinois law prohibits such use of state resources for political purposes.

"What this tells me is Gov. Ryan, when he was secretary of state, and the staff around him either didn't understand or didn't take seriously the fact you don't use government resources for political purposes," said Cindi Canary, coordinator of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, a government watchdog group.

In the 1994 re-election bid against Democrat Pat Quinn, Ryan campaign workers frequently used state telephones for political work, though his campaign documents from that period showed he reimbursed the state for those calls.

In this case, there was no evidence in Ryan's campaign filings of repaying the state for Tatro's or Sonneveld's time or for the use of debugging equipment. At the time, Tatro was paid $ 44,004 a year, while Sonneveld's salary was $ 40,164, according to state records.

Tatro could not be reached, and Sonneveld would not comment on the new allegation.

Ryan spokesman Dennis Culloton said he queried members of Ryan's campaign staff from that era, and no one was aware of the sweep conducted at the campaign office. "We don't know anything about it. We can't comment on it," Culloton said.

Earlier this month, government prosecutors contended Bauer trusted Sonneveld to perform such sensitive electronic sweeps within Ryan's state offices. Sources said Sonneveld viewed the Bauer order to sweep the campaign office as "an awful position to be in" but did as he was told.

Sonneveld has played a key role in the government's investigation of wrongdoing under Ryan. He was among agents who alleged Bauer halted internal probes that had the potential of embarrassing Ryan. In one case, Sonneveld found the trucker involved in the 1994 crash that killed six Chicago children had obtained his Illinois license through a bribe.

Previously, Ryan acknowledged being aware of some electronic sweeps, saying it was "not unusual" for them to occur in his and other state offices. But he did not elaborate, when questioned, on what motivated him to have the sweeps performed in the first place.