WASHINGTON — To spare Alabama's Gov. George Wallace from the embarrassment of having his name dragged through a long trial, Attorney General Richard Kleindienst personally intervened last week to stop the prosecution of the ex-commandant of the Alabama Air National Guard.

Major General Reid Doster, the former guard commander, had been charged by a federal grand jury with squeezing illegal political contributions out of guard officers. The indictment said he had turned over $1,000 of the illegally raised money to the 1970 gubernatorial campaign of George Wallace, whom Doster has called his "personal friend."

By the time the case was scheduled to be tried last week, federal prosecutor Ira Dement had lined up 40 witnesses to testify. The trial was expected to last weeks.

But on the day the trial was to begin, Dement suddenly dropped the charges. Doster agreed, in return, to resign his commission. Three other defendants, subordinates of Doster, were let off scot free. We have now learned that the decision to call off the trial was made personally by Kleindienst. When my reporter Mark McIntyre demanded to know why the charges were dropped, a Justice Department spokesman blurted: "Because Governor Wallace was involved."

It wasn't the first time that the Nixon Administration suppressed a criminal action embarrassing to Wallace. Our stories four years ago about Wallace's political payoff system led to an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service. In a confidential summary of the case made available to us, the IRS charged that the Wallace law firm, then operated by George and his brother Gerald, had been used as a conduit for kickbacks from state contractors.

The IRS also concluded that Gerald Wallace had failed to report the full income that came to him through the firm in 1967 and 1968. His taxable income for the two years was given as $175,924.

Yet the federal tax case against Gerald Wallace was suddenly abandoned after a private conference between President Nixon and Governor Wallace last year aboard the presidential plane. Not long afterward, George Wallace announced his candidacy for President as a Democrat.

White House aides, discussing the political outlook with us later, said they had assurances Wallace would not run as an independent no matter what, the outcome of the Democratic convention. They regarded this as a significant advantage for the President, particularly in case of a three-fought election.

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