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HEADLINE: FBI General Counsel to Depart in June; Shapiro Was Accused of 'Poor Judgment' in White House Files Matter

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BODY:

FBI general counsel Howard M. Shapiro resigned yesterday, effectively ending an official investigation that had produced accusations of poor judgment in his handling of the White House files controversy.

Shapiro is a longtime friend of FBI Director Louis J. Freeh and is widely considered one of Freeh's most effective appointments.

Shapiro said in a statement that he is quitting effective June 6 and will become a partner at the law firm of Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering.

In a statement announcing Shapiro's departure, Freeh praised the former prosecutor for improving relations between the FBI and the CIA and for helping manage several important cases, such as the 1996 Freeman standoff in Montana. "Howard's contributions to the FBI during his tenure have been substantial," Freeh said.

Attorney General Janet Reno said in a statement, "He was always a voice of calm in times of crisis, and he will be sorely missed."

A Justice Department report on Shapiro's activities last summer during a congressional inquiry into the files controversy -- White House aides had improperly collected personnel files on former Republican administration workers -- concluded that he had made a "horrific blunder" when he tipped off aides to President Clinton about potentially damaging information that was about to emerge on Capitol Hill.

The Justice Department review criticized Shapiro's "poor judgment" but did not accuse him of official misconduct.

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