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Can Hunt Pin Rap On Kennedy?

BY FRANK VAN DER LINDEN

WASHINGTON—Before the widening inquires into the Central Intelligence Agency end, convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt is likely to achieve his long-sought goal, of implicating the late President John F. Kennedy's administration in plots to assassinate several foreign political chieftains.

The CIA steadfastly denies having ordered any assassinations. But some agents indirectly in its pay may have been the ones who murdered Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, and plotted unsuccessfully to kill Fidel Castro in Cuba.

The first two murders occurred in 1961, the first year of Kennedy's presidency. In the same year, Hunt, a longtime CIA agent, masterminded the abortive Bay of Pigs coup against Castro.

He later admitted fabricating a few phony cables intended to prove the charge.

Record Is Clear

That was not only a criminal act, but a stupid one. The Pentagon Papers provided enough evidence to show that the CIA and U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in Saigon had collaborated with the South Vietnamese rivals in their coup and refused to give Diem asylum which could have saved his life.

An Aug. 2, 1971 memorandum from Hunt to White House aide Charles Colson, turned up by the House Judiciary Committee in its Nixon impeachment inquiry, shows how Hunt was piecing together CIA and State Department cables to indict "the Round Table and its fallible King," as he termed Kennedy.

The dispatches, he told Colson, "add up to an indictment of Kennedy and his advisers, and they played false with the nation.... As Madame Nhu said at the time, the blood of Diem and Nhu is on Kennedy's hands and Lodge's as well."

In a July 27, 1971, memo to Colson, entitled "Anti-Diem Coup Post Mortem," Hunt ordered copies of official cables and memos for the April-November 1963 period and made this reference to former CIA Director Richard Helms and Averell Harriman, Kennedy's Undersecretary of State: "Ask Dick Helms to expand on his allegation that Harriman engineered the coup."

Hunt implicated the Kennedy Administration in CIA domestic activities in his secret testimony before the Senate Watergate committee Dec. 18, 1973. This testimony, which was not printed by the committee, has been obtained from its files.

Hunt testified that he was the "Chief of Covert Actions" in the CIA Domestic Operations Division, set up "in the wake of the Bay of Pigs operation, that is to say, early in 1962."

"His chief was the late C. Tracy Barnes and I was appointed as the Chief of Covert Action," Hunt said.

The Network

"The Domestic Operations Division was set up very much along the lines of

a counterpart division within MI 6, the British Intelligence Service, and it comprehended, among other things, all of CIA's so-called proprietary activities such as commercial firms that were set up for noncover reasons within the United States and included such operational activities as Air America — we ran Air America, funded it — all of CIA's airflights in different parts of the world, Africa, Vietnam.

"We established field stations in Boston and Chicago and San Francisco. These were parallel to the overt CIA establishments, and a large variety of domestic based operations were conducted by this division."

Hunt, who is free on appeal from his conviction for complicity in the Watergate break-in, should be called as a witness by the new Senate committee investigating the CIA and other federal intelligence agencies.

His earlier testimony indicates the CIA violated the legal ban on domestic activities; he could also shed much light on other intriguing aspects of its work.

VAN DER LINDEN IS A SYNDICATED COLUMNIST FOR THE NASHVILLE BANNER.

Point of View

