

Ehrlichman Links CIA to Burglary

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When Watergate conspirators E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy organized a burglary at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, they were told to provide material for the Central Intelligence Agency, among others, according to the latest private account by former presidential adviser John D. Ehrlichman.

At the request of David Young, then an aide to the National Security Council, Hunt and Liddy were to develop information for the CIA's use in preparing a "psychological profile" of Ellsberg, Ehrlichman says.

That version is in direct conflict with sworn grand jury testimony by Hunt, who has said that the CIA was called in to prepare the profile only after the burglary failed to produce useful information.

CIA officials have also said that, although they provided Hunt and Liddy with disguises and other "technical assistance," they had no interest or involvement in the burglary.

Ehrlichman's account, provided recently to a Washington Post reporter, also indicates, as President Nixon has previously, that the special supplementary White House investigation of Ellsberg was launched because of confusion and alarm over the leak of the Pentagon Papers.

(Ellsberg has long acknowledged that he was responsible for the leak. The case against him, on charges of conspiracy, espionage and theft of government property was dismissed in May, after revelation of the burglary and other government misconduct directed against him.)

A Los Angeles County grand jury has been investigating Ehrlichman and those who worked under him on the White House "plumbers" squad in connection with the burglary.

Ehrlichman has insisted that he had no advance knowledge of the burglary and that he chastised Hunt and Liddy when he learned about it—although he did not report it to the appropriate authorities.

According to Ehrlichman's account, the White House was dissatisfied with the FBI's investigation of Ellsberg at the time of the Pentagon Papers leak and suspected that J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the bureau, was holding back because of his friendship with Ellsberg's father-in-law, millionaire toy manufacturer Louis Marx.

That same theme was stressed last week in the testimony of presidential aide Richard Moore before the Senate select Watergate committee.

It has astonished and angered FBI officials who were connected with the original bureau probe of Ellsberg, which was under way more than a year before the Pentagon Papers were published.

Those who have inspected the bureau files on Ellsberg suggest that, if anything, they are too complete, since they include almost day-by-day accounts of his social life, telephone calls and recreational pursuits.

FBI sources have also said that Hoover could not have been constrained by his friendship with Marx, because it was widely known that the toy manufacturer had little to do with—and intensely disliked—his son-in-law.

Ehrlichman's version of events also sheds new light on his meetings during the Pentagon Papers trial with the presiding judge, W. Matt Byrne Jr., who was then a prime candidate to be named permanent director of the FBI.

The former presidential aide insists, for example, that his approach to Byrne in mid-trial was endorsed by then Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and that the judge felt there was nothing improper about a general discussion of his possible appointment to the FBI post.

In fact, according to Ehrlichman, it was Byrne who requested a second meeting with the Nixon aide and offered to return to the western White House at San Clemente, where the two men had met the first time.

The second meeting was instead held in a public park in Santa Monica near Ehrlichman's mother's home. That site was selected, according to Ehrlichman's account, because the presidential aide feared that Byrne would be seen visiting the Nixon compound in San Clemente.

Kleindienst could not be reached for comment on Ehrlichman's assertion that he had approved the approach to Byrne about the FBI job.

The former Attorney General has previously said, however, that he thought it was improper for Byrne and Ehrlichman to have such discussions while the trial was still in progress.

Byrne, through his secretary, declined to discuss Ehrlichman's recollection about the meetings, as he has previously.

Many of those who supported him for the FBI post have expressed their disappointment that he met with Ehrlichman, but they now suggest that if the judge initiated the second meeting, that fact could be grounds for impeachment or disbarment.