

Marine Corp Commandant ~~By~~ Four-Star General Robert E. Cushman, former

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, settled easily into the witness chair at the Ervin committee' session the afternoon of Thursday, August 2, 1973. That chair had just been vacated by his former Central Intelligence Chief, Richard Helms. The hot lights for TV focused on him, Cushman remained cool and unruffled through one of the shortest of the committee's questionings.

It was also one of the more incompetent questionings. Cushman's unruffled calm, the serenity with which he began, marks him as a man of remarkable composure. And this is because he held secrets.

When he had finished, save for some blundering in Republican partisan effort to buttress Nixon's position, he still held ~~some~~ those secrets. What little emerged because of the blundering was unreported on that night's network TV and the next day's papers. This almost assured that it would remain secret, with one big hurdle remaining, E. Howard Hunt.

Cushman lied.

The committee had the proof of his lying - in context perjury - and missed or ignored it.

Why should Cushman, already higher in a long military career than all but a very small number of the millions who have been in the service, jeopardize that career and his reputation, to say nothing of criminal offense, to lie on full camera, on nationwide TV?

Therein lies the clue to one of the major crises in Richard Nixon's Seventh.

Cushman is the man through whom John Ehrlichman had enlisted CIA's aid in Hunt's White House clandestine/projects. Any such domestic operations by the CIA is illegal. Cushman knew it. It can be argued, of course, that one does not easily reject a White House request, especially from Richard Nixon's White House. It is about this, which makes the testimony "material" within the meaning of the statute, that Cushman was questioned.

And in this questioning it turned out that the CIA had a tape of Cushman's conversation with Hunt when Hunt appeared in his office late in July, 1971. How come the tape? And why

the editing of the transcript, done by masking parts as it was xeroxed?

Cushman fumbled through the second question, without causing any concern. Parts of the tape were unclear, there had been airplane noise, and the rest was chitchat. The reason for taping, and how often did he, too, make secret tapes?

Only about six times in his three years as DDCI, deputy intelligence director. And the reason was a mild apprehension because Hunt has asked that their meeting be face-to-face, had asked that Cushman's executive assistant leave.

This was not the reason. This is where and why Cushman lied. And none of the seven members of the committee nor all their counsel present nor all the staff that had gone over this transcript in advance caught this important lie.

Richard Nixon appears to have, for soon thereafter he took his helicopter and flew to his Berchtesgaden im Catoctins in solitary splendor, no staff, no Rebobo. Only a stuffed brief case.

The moment may have come when he could start preparing the long-promised statement to end all statements and render inoperative all the many earlier one not yet so ordained.

The lie and more is established in the very first words of the transcript;

"Cushman: Hey, good to see you. Come on in, have a seat."

Four-star general's don't usually greet great men they don't know or know slightly with such effusive warmth, beginning with "Hey." Hunt was no stranger to former Colonel Cushman. Hunt's reply was cold:

"Could we make this just the two of us?"

"All right, sure. We certainly can," Cushman responded.

Now, aside from these clear indications of a once-close relationship between the two, the reason for Cushman's unusual act in taping his meeting with Hunt, has to be false. The proof is obvious because before Hunt ask for a tete-a-tete the machine was turned on, capturing what was said. That old-friend, old-boy, "Hey, good to see you. Come on it" opening could not have been captured had the machine not been turned on until after Hunt "Could we make ~~ix~~ this just the two of us?"

110

Why, then, did this military eminence, this former number 2 man of the CIA, perjure himself so publicly, in so serious an official proceeding?

The answer to that was in my files long before he appeared to testify. I it was all ~~publicly~~ readily available, if not all on the bookshelves.

related questions of the many  
Two other ~~points~~ unasked and unanswered ~~questions~~ require attention at the outset  
if this unusual coup, pulled off so smoothly, is to be understood.

Why did the White House, through Hunt, ask the CIA for what it could have bought  
at slight cost in any of Washington's many downtown photo stores so close to the White  
House one might have walked to several before an empty cab came past?

Knowing this, why did Cushman honor the request and get the CIA involved in what  
he certainly knew was illegality?