

Watergate Threatens to Decimate The CIA

By Thomas B. Ross

WASHINGTON — (CST)

The Watergate scandal has already undermined the FBI, the Justice Department and the State Department.

Now it threatens to decimate the Central Intelligence Agency.

The CIA has confessed to providing equipment and facilities used by a White House espionage team in the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Beyond that, Richard Helms, former director of the CIA and currently Ambassador to Iran, has been identified as the official who approved the White House request for a psychiatric profile of Ellsberg.

The CIA's involvement in the Watergate scandal is perhaps the most appalling of all.

When the CIA was being created in 1947, fears were expressed in Congress that it would be turned into a secret police.

Question Raised

Rep. Clarence J. Brown, the conservative Republican from Ohio, raised the question with James V. Forrestal, who was to become the first Secretary of Defense under the new National Security Act.

Brown: I am not interested in setting up here in the United States any particular agency under any President and I do not care what his name is and just allow him to have a gesture of his own if he wants to have it. Every now and then you get a man that comes up in power that has an imperialist idea.

Forrestal: The purposes of the Central Intelligence Authority are limited definitely to purposes outside of this country except the collection of information gathered by government agencies.

Brown: Is that stated in the law?

Forrestal: It is not; no.

Brown: That could be changed in two minutes, and have the action within the United States instead of without; is that correct?

Forrestal: He could only do so with the President's direct and specific approval.

Law Amended

To ward off covert med-

dling in the U.S. political system, Congress amended the proposed CIA law to provide that "the agency shall have no police, subpoena, law-enforcement, or internal security functions."

However, the final act contained two loopholes.

The agency was charged with protecting "intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosures"—a provision designed to make sure the CIA kept its own documents under lock and key but stretched, in some instances, to cover counter-intelligence operations inside the United States.

The act also authorized the CIA to perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct.

The Security Council is headed by the President and so the law can be construed as directing the CIA to do whatever the President wants it to do, as long as he describes the action as "affecting national security."

The request for CIA help at the time of the Ellsberg investigation came from former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman, then one of Nixon's top two advisers.

Accordingly, CIA lawyers argue that even if the agency had known what was to be done with its equipment, which they deny, the action would still have fallen within the law.

Softer Line

However, CIA Director James R. Schlesinger, named Thursday as the new Defense secretary, took a softer line in testimony to Congress. He called the action "ill-advised" and promised new procedures so that it would not happen again.

To replace Schlesinger at the CIA, Nixon named William Egan Colby, a career agent and head of the operations division, the so-called "department of dirty tricks."

Colby is the very personification of the CIA's maneu-

vering in foreign lands, its involvement in the support undermining and overthrow of other governments.

Schlesinger's departure from the CIA was foisted all along the agency's "old boy net." He was embarked on a major reorganization of the agency, appearing to be giving the military more power over national intelligence estimates and declaring an intention of cutting back on foreign operations.

The agency has long been under attack for skullduggery in distant lands. Now it is charged with illegal activity at home. White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler insisted that Colby shared Schlesinger's views on reorienting CIA's role and his chagrin over the Ellsberg burglary.

But it will not be easy for Colby, a brilliant, convinced practitioner of the black arts of foreign intervention, that the CIA is giving up on dirty tricks abroad and at home.