

# Tracing Role Of White House In Watergate

By Edward Walsh

Washington Post Staff Writer

Ever since the arrests of five men in the bugging of Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate last June 17, investigations of the case have traced a tortuous path that finally implicated high-ranking present or former Nixon administration aides.

Those first implicated in the case were obscure, former White House aides with names like Hunt and Liddy. But as the investigations went on, the name "Watergate" came to refer also to other alleged acts of political sabotage during the 1972 Nixon re-election campaign.

Until Tuesday, when the President himself announced there were "major developments" in the case and hinted that his own investigation into the matter had implicated presidential assistants, news accounts of the widening scandal were greeted by White House and Nixon campaign spokesmen with carefully worded statements that ignored details of allegations. There were countercharges that segments of the press were out to get the President.

In a briefing following Mr. Nixon's announcement Tuesday, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler called these previous statements "inoperative."

"The President's statement today is the operative statement," Ziegler said.

The first link between the Watergate case and the Nixon re-election campaign came a day after the break-in when James W. McCord, one of those arrested inside the Watergate, was identi-

fied as security coordinator for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

The suspects in the bugging case "were not operating either in our behalf or with our consent," said former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, at the time, Mr. Nixon's campaign manager.

The next day, news accounts reported that E. Howard Hunt Jr., a consultant to special presidential counsel Charles W. Colson, was listed in the pocket telephone books of two of the bugging suspects. At the White House, Ziegler said the President would not comment on "a third rate burglary attempt" and noted that "certain elements may try to stretch this beyond what it is."

Later in July, another link with the Nixon campaign organization was established when investigators determined that Bernard L. Barker, one of the bugging suspects, had made several telephone calls to G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House aide who at that time was counsel to the re-election committee.

In August, investigators traced \$89,000 in Nixon campaign funds that had been raised in Texas to the bank account of one of the bugging suspects.

President Nixon's first personal statement on the case came last Aug. 29. After telling newsmen that John W. Dean III, his special counsel, had conducted an independent investigation into the case, Mr. Nixon said:

"I can say categorically that his (Dean's) investigation indicates that no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration,

presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident . . .

"What really hurts in matters of this sort is not the fact that they occur, because overzealous people in campaigns do things that are wrong. What really hurts is if you try to cover it up."

In the months ahead, presidential spokesmen were to refer repeatedly to Mr. Nixon's Aug. 29 statement and the Dean investigation when questioned about White House involvement in the Watergate affair and allegations of related political sabotage.

Dean's name was to surface again seven months later when McCord would identify the White House investigator of the case as one who he had been told was directly involved in it from the beginning.

On Sept. 15, Hunt and Liddy were indicted in the Watergate case. On Sept. 17 The Post reported that several high-ranking aides to Mitchell at the campaign committee controlled a secret cash fund allegedly used to finance political sabotage and espionage against the Democrat.

On Sept. 18, The Post reported that Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former White House aide and deputy director of the re-election

committee, and Herbert L. Porter, the committee's scheduling committee, had been linked to the secret fund and that had withdrawn more than \$50,000 from it.

Magruder, a protege of H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, said The Post story was "absolutely untrue."

On Sept. 20, two more administration names were mentioned: Robert C. Mar-dian, a former assistant attorney general under Mitchell and political coordinator for the Nixon campaign committee, and Frederick La Rue, a former White counsel and special assistant to the campaign director. It was reported that they had seen to the destruction of various financial records and other information after the Watergate suspects were arrested.

Spokesmen for the re-election committee refused to comment on the story but



said The Post's sources "are a fountain of misinformation."

In late September, The Post said Mitchell controlled the secret cash fund, and on Oct. 10 reported that the Watergate bugging was but part of a massive campaign of political sabotage directed by White House and Nixon campaign officials.

An Oct. 19 story named Donald H. Segretti, a young California attorney, as a major operative in the sabotage campaign. Less than a week later, The Post reported that Segretti reported his activities directly to Dwight L. Chapin, the President's appointments secretary and another Haldeman protege.

The White House declined comment on the details of the story. "As The Washington Post reporter has described it, the story is based on hearsay and is fundamentally inaccurate," Chapin said through a spokesman.

On Oct. 16, The Post reported that Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's personal attorney, also had control over the secret cash fund from which payments were made to Segretti, and Time magazine said Gordon Strachan, a White House staff assistant and aide to Haldeman, had helped hire Segretti.

There was no immediate comment from the White House, but the next day presidential spokesmen criticized news stories linking presidential aides to the scandal. At the White House, Ziegler accused The Post of printing stories "based on hearsay, character assassination, innuendo or guilt by association."

These developments occurred less than a month before the presidential election in November and

marked an apparent change in White House policy—from one of issuing denials or ignoring accusations of involvement in the Watergate affair to one of charging that the press was attempting to aid Mr. Nixon's Democratic opponent, Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.).

On Oct. 25, The Post reported that Haldeman himself was one of those who had control over the secret fund. In a terse statement issued through a spokesman, Haldeman said: "Your inquiry is based on misinformation because the reference to Bob Haldeman is untrue."

Ziegler denied that a secret fund existed, or that Haldeman had access to it.

On Oct. 26, however, Clark MacGregor, then Mr. Nixon's campaign manager, confirmed that a cash fund existed and that top officials could draw from it. Those who had access to the fund, he said, included Mitchell, Magruder, Porter, Liddy and Maurice S. Stans, the committee's finance chairman.

No new White House names were linked to the case for several months. Then, on March 21, McCord, about to be sentenced after being found guilty in the Watergate conspiracy, told U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica that pressure had been put on the bugging defendants to plead guilty and remain silent and that more than the seven men convicted were involved in the case.

On March 24, Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) quoted the President as saying: "I have nothing to hide. The White House has nothing to hide. I repeat, we have nothing to hide and you are authorized to make that statement in my name."