

Colson Implicated By Hunt Testimony

FPOST 5/8/73

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt has testified secretly that former White House counsel Charles W. Colson told him to forge State Department cablegrams to make it appear that President John F. Kennedy had ordered the assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, it was revealed Monday.

Hunt's revelation that he doctored actual cablegrams to make them implicate Kennedy was made in Washington, D.C., grand jury testimony given last Wednesday. It was released by the Pentagon papers trial judge here.

In his testimony, Hunt said the plot to link Kennedy to the Diem assassination was hatched as a result of his own analysis of the Pentagon papers and State Department files as a member of the White House undercover unit.

Hunt said Colson wanted to hide direct evidence of White House involvement, calling the plan "too hot."

Hunt said he reported to Colson that there were many gaps in the series of State Department cables concerning the Diem involvements in 1963.

"Mr. Colson said, 'Well, what kind of material have you dug up on the files that would indicate Kennedy complicity?'" Hunt said.

"I showed him three or four cables that indicated that they had pretty close to pulled the trigger against Premier Diem's head," said Hunt. "But it didn't say so in so many words. Inferentially, one would say it was a high degree of administration complicity in the central assassination of Diem and his brother."

Hunt then said, "Mr. Colson

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said, 'Well, that isn't enough. Do you think you can improve on them?' I said yes, I probably could, but not without technical assistance. He said, 'Well I won't be able to give you any technical help. This is too hot. See what you can do on your own.'

"So with meager means at my disposal," Hunt said, "... I set about creating cables." He said he used a Xerox machine, razor blades and a typewriter. He said he consulted with the FBI on what kind of typeface was used on such cablegrams, and found out he could not get a typewriter to reproduce that particular type. He realized that any investigation would uncover the flaw and decided not to release the cables.

But after the cables were complete, Hunt said he received a call from Colson's office saying a newsman — Bill Lambert of Time-Life — was being sent over to see the cables. "I began to believe that was the purpose Mr. Colson had in mind," said Hunt. But Hunt said he was advised, "Don't let them get out of your hands."

Lambert arrived and was shown the cables, Hunt said, and the newsman "was quite exultant over the find." He said Lambert copied the cables in longhand.

The transcript of Hunt's testimony shows that he told his story to the grand jury when asked by Watergate prosecutor Earl J. Silbert whether he was involved in any "covert" activities related to the Pentagon papers case.

Hunt has said he and coconspirator G. Gordon Liddy were hired by the White House to investigate the Pentagon papers leak to news media.

Hunt has also confessed that he, Liddy and others burglarized Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office to get the defendant's records.