

Colson Tells FBI Of 'Silence' Orders

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LOS ANGELES, May 10— Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to President Nixon, has revealed that he was ordered three times—twice by John Ehrlichman and once by John Dean—to keep quiet about the break-in into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

One of those occasions, Colson said, was during an official investigation into the Watergate affair. Another was just before the news broke last month that a special White House burglary squad had broken into the Beverly Hills office of the psychiatrist treating Ellsberg, co-defendant in the Pentagon Papers trial.

These latest revelations were contained in an FBI interview with Colson on Tuesday, made available to the defense today by Pentagon Papers trial Judge W. Matt Byrne Jr.

Colson's statement provides strong indications that persons high in the White House had made the connection between the Pentagon Papers affair and the Watergate investigation and tried to suppress it.

The crux of what Colson, who resigned his White House job early this year, disclosed:

He knew the White House "plumbers squad" was working on the Pentagon Papers case—in fact he recommended Howard Hunt, the man who later led the burglary team, for his job with the special unit.

He did not learn about the burglary until "sometime later" at a meeting with Ehrlichman, who was then the President's domestic affairs adviser. At that time Ehrlichman told him, in the

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words of the FBI summary, "this was a national security matter and not to be discussed by anyone."

Still later, after the Watergate break-in last summer, and during the time the Justice Department was investigating, Colson was called to give a deposition to U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert.

Colson said that before testifying he asked John Dean, then counsel to the President, what to do if the "Pentagon Papers question came up."

Colson said Dean told him that if asked, "he was not to discuss the matter, as it was a national security matter of the highest classification and that he (Dean) would interrupt such questions if present."

Colson told the FBI "he recalled receiving the same instruction from Mr. Ehrlichman in late March or April, 1973."

That latter date apparently was just days before Ehrlichman summoned Judge Byrne to the Western White House on April 5 and discussed the offer of the FBI directorship.

Since news of the burglary and of Byrne's visit to the White House broke nearly two weeks ago, the defense in the Pentagon Papers trial has been maintaining that Ehrlichman knew the burglary story was about to come out and was attempting to influence Judge Byrne.

Colson's statement now confirms that the burglary issue was under active con-

sideration by Ehrlichman around that time. Byrne, who knew nothing of the burglary at the time, has said that he was in no way compromised by the offer and has refused to discuss it until after the trial.

Colson maintained in his four-page interview that he knew peripherally about the special White House squad, but did not take an active role personally. He told the FBI he knew that the "plumbers" were conducting a check for a personality profile of Daniel Ellsberg to determine what motivated him, what kind of "wild things" he might do.

He also knew, according to the FBI summary, that the plumbers were going to the West Coast, but did not know which of them would actually make the trip.

Colson told the FBI he "first heard about the alleged burglary sometime later at a meeting and he could not recall the time of the meeting or who was present. He thought the meeting may have been a private one with Mr. Ehrlichman."

Colson said he remembered Ehrlichman telling him that "they tried to get the records of Ellsberg's psychiatrist and did not get them." It was at that undated meeting that Ehrlichman first warned Colson to keep the matter quiet.

Referring to pay vouchers showing that Colson authorized reimbursement to Hunt for airplane fare, meals and hotels, Colson said he never saw any of Hunt's vouchers but that

his secretary had initialed and forwarded them for payment.

Colson said that from time to time he saw memoranda prepared for the special White House squad, but never saw any reports prepared by the unit.

The FBI said: "The memoranda which were shown to him by Hunt because of Colson's general interest in the issue of the Pentagon Papers, spoke of Hunt's Papers, spoke of Hunt's frustrations trying to get things done in the plumber's unit and Hunt's analyses of the investigation. Colson said nothing relating to the psychological study of Ellsberg."

There was nothing in the interview regarding grand jury statements by Hunt that Colson had urged him to forge State Department cables linking the John F. Kennedy administration with the assassination of South Vietnam Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. Hunt composed two phony cables in 1971 and passed the contents along to a reporter. The FBI report of the Colson interview did not say whether he had been asked about the cables.

Judge Byrne turned over three additional documents to the defense today. Two were memos from the Central Intelligence Agency, which has admitted it gave technical assistance to the burglary squad. Both memos were marked "secret." The third was a brief statement from Felipe de Diego, a Cuban who was part of the Hunt burglary team.

CIA documents disclosed that G. Gordon Liddy, another member of the team, later convicted with Hunt in the Watergate burglary, was given special CIA security clearance in December, 1969, "in connection with his employment by the Department of the Treasury."

At the time, the memo said, "Liddy was listed as a member of the presidential task force reporting on narcotics, marijuana and dangerous drugs."

De Diego, interviewed by the FBI, said he would give full details on his role in the burglary if granted immunity from prosecution.