

# House Panel Hears Colson

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Former White House aide Charles W. Colson said Monday that he had been told that President Nixon once said he had approved "the operation" in connection with Daniel Ellsberg — but Colson said he did not know what operation was meant.

"It doesn't necessarily mean a burglary," Colson told newsmen during a dinner break from his closed-door testimony to the House impeachment inquiry. Colson's testimony prompted confusion among the House Judiciary Committee members.

Some said they thought Colson was suggesting Nixon had acknowledged approving the burglary of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office. But most said the testimony was either unclear or that it was clear Col-

son had not specifically referred to the burglary.

Members were expected to press Colson on what he did mean when their turn came, following committee counsels' questioning, to ask their own questions.

Rep. Hamilton Fish Jr., R-N.Y., said that during questioning on Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers Colson testified that former aide John D. Ehrlichman had told him that Nixon had told assistant Atty. Gen. Henry Petersen that he (Nixon) had approved "the operation."

But Colson said in response to newsmen's questions as he left the hearing room that he did not know what Ehrlichman was suggesting the President might have meant by that.

"I just used the precise

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words he used," Colson said. Nixon said in a detailed statement on May 22, 1973, that he did order an investigation by the White House Plumbers unit of Ellsberg as part of the investigation to find out how the Pentagon Papers had been leaked to the public. Nixon said he could understand how highly motivated aides could misconstrue his order and go further than the President had intended.

Fish quoted Colson as quoting Ehrlichman as saying Nixon made the statement of having approved "the operation" in April 1973 — nearly two years after the Ellsberg Pentagon Papers' investigation.

Earlier, Colson told the committee that Nixon knew about and acquiesced in a cover story for the FBI investigation of CBS newsmen Daniel Schorr, according to three congressmen.