

Hunt Declares No Higher-Ups in Plot

By Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward

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Former White House consultant E. Howard Hunt Jr. said yesterday that to his "personal knowledge" there were no "higher-ups" in the Nixon administration involved in the plot to bug Democratic headquarters.

Hunt also said he has no knowledge of any wider campaign of political espionage than is now being tried in the Watergate bugging case.

Meeting with reporters for the first time since the June 17 break-in at the Watergate, Hunt's comments came after he pleaded guilty to all six counts in the indictment against him, ranging from burglary to wiretapping.

"Anything I may have done I did for what I believed to be in the best interest of my country," the former CIA agent and author of more than 40 spy and sex novels told reporters. "And as a believer in the law, I understood then and understand now, the consequences of breaking it."

Hunt faces up to 35 years' imprisonment after pleading guilty to conspiracy to obtain information from the Democrats by bugging their offices, wiretapping their telephones, stealing their orders, photographing their

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documents and planting spies in their campaign headquarters.

Shortly after the prosecution outlined its case against the seven Watergate defendants Wednesday, Hunt entered a guilty plea to three of the six counts against him.

Hunt's lawyer, William O. Bittman, had said his client was—in effect—"pleading to the entire indictment" and admitting his total role in a conspiracy. But U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. Sirica refused yesterday to accept a plea to only those three counts—conspiracy, breaking-and-entering, and interception of wire communications.

Sirica, citing "the apparent strength of the government's case" against Hunt, told him that "the proper representation of the public interest in justice" could not permit acceptance of a plea to only some of the charges.

Bittman then rose to enter a guilty plea on all six counts in the indictment, adding the following charges to the original plea: another breaking-and-entering count, attempted interception of oral communications, and attempted interception of wire communications.

Rejecting Bittman's argument that Hunt remain free on his current \$10,000 bond pending sentencing, the judge set additional bond of \$100,000 and ordered Hunt jailed until posting the money.

Hunt stood almost at attention, his hands at his side, as he faced the judge and answered Sirica's questions about whether he understood the consequences of pleading guilty with the phrase, "Yes, your honor, I do."

Hunt was held in the U.S. courthouse lockup for about three hours, then released upon posting \$100,000 that had been obtained from a surety company. The money had been guaranteed against

the premiums from life insurance policies bought by Hunt's wife before an airline flight on which she was killed last month.

Ashen-faced but calm, Hunt met briefly with reporters upon his release and under ground rules established by his attorney: that Hunt would make a brief statement and then answer three previously submitted questions.

"Gentlemen, I'd like to say this," he began in a clear, modulated voice, and asserted that he had done "what I believed to be in the best interest of my country . . ."

His plea of guilty, he said in answer to the first question, "was a result of a great many factors . . . With the unexpected and tragic death of my wife just a month ago, I felt that I could not sustain the experience of a long trial. I felt that I should be with my children. I felt further that by pleading guilty, my plea of guilty might be taken into consideration at the time of sentencing later on and result in a, perhaps, the time of sentencing later hopefully, lesser sentence."

After characterizing the prosecution's opening statement of his role in the bugging case as "substantially correct," Hunt was asked: "If you testify before a grand jury (as he agreed to do upon pleading guilty) will your testimony implicate higher-ups or indicate that there was a wider con-

spiracy than the one now being tried?"

"I would testify to the following, gentlemen," said Hunt. "To my personal knowledge there was not."

He refused to elaborate, adding only, "I am very anxious to be reunited with my family and I leave you with that."

According to the prosecution's opening statement in the trial, Hunt attempted to recruit several persons to participate in undercover activities against the Democrats, including a 25-year-old college student who worked as a spy in the presidential campaigns of Sen. Edmund

S. Muskie and Sen. George McGovern.

During the FBI's Watergate investigation, federal sources told Washington Post reporters that Hunt was a key figure in undercover political activities—conceived by high White House aides—which have not been mentioned by the prosecution in the bugging trial.

Among them, according to those sources, was an attempt by Hunt to persuade a California lawyer, Donald H. Segretti, to organize an "attack" on GOP convention headquarters — in the name of supporters of the Demo-

cratic presidential nominee.

Segretti has said that both Hunt and presidential appointments secretary Dwight L. Chapin were among his "contacts" for political spying and disruption. Segretti's name was on the prosecution's original list of witnesses for the Watergate trial, but it was not read in court as the trial opened Monday.

In his career, Hunt had been an operative for the CIA around the globe, a consultant to the White House, and a public relations man.