

Experts Heap Scorn on Bungled

By Ronald Kessler

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Wiretap experts yesterday described the attempted bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters as one of the most unprofessional and bungled jobs they had ever heard of.

Based on descriptions of the bugging equipment confiscated by police and the methods used by the five intruders arrested early Saturday morning, these experts, many with years of bugging and de-bugging experience, called the job a Mack Sennett comedy, a Mickey Mouse operation and a blot on the bugging profession.

"This is fantastic," said one wiretapper. "That kind of (bugging) equipment went out with high-button shoes. These guys have got to be circus bums," he said.

The surreptitious and strictly illegal art of bugging and wiretapping is normally carried out by trained professionals who spend much of their time developing new and more sophisticated methods of snooping on other people's conversations. These professionals, often former government employees, private detectives or electronics experts, sometimes work for industrial saboteurs, the Mafia, and other criminal clients. They can point to years of planting bugging devices in hotels, offices and homes without ever getting caught.

It is to these professionals that a political party, or faction within one, would normally turn for bugging serv-

ices. According to the bugging experts interviewed yesterday, it has not been uncommon in elections past for this to happen, either before or after the party nomination, and they said it is particularly common for candidates of the same party to bug one another.

The purpose, they said, is to determine convention strategy, develop derogatory information on a rival for possible release to the press, or to ferret out real or imagined plots against each other.

None of the experts admitted to knowing of any bugging attempts in the current presidential election campaign.

The bugs are rarely discovered, and when they are, the targets of the surveillance rarely want the incidents publicized, the experts said.

The police yesterday officially declined to describe the devices found at Democratic headquarters, but one police electronics expert who said he had examined the equipment said it included at least one transmitter consisting of a three-inch-by-five-inch printed circuit board carrying a transistor, a resistor and several capacitors, as well as six 1-volt flashlight batteries wired in a series to produce a total of nine volts.

In addition, the police source said, a number of microphone devices the size of half dollars and equipped with suction cups were found.

According to police, four

of the five suspects had taken rooms at the Watergate Hotel, which adjoins the Watergate office building in which Democratic headquarters are located. Presumably, the hotel rooms could have been used as listening posts for monitoring conversations beamed by the transmitters.

Wiretap experts interviewed yesterday faulted the job as almost every point.

"In the first place," said one of the experts, "can-you imagine hiring guys from Miami? You'd get local, top talent to do the job right. If I were going into a strange town, I'd employ only local guys. They know the field, they have the contracts."

Michael J. Morrissey, chief engineer of a Holmes, N.Y., company that makes bugging devices for police agencies and trains police in their use, was incredulous when told five men had been arrested in connection with the job.

"If they follow the usual route, they hire only one man who doesn't know who he's working for. This is the most amateurish job lever saw," he said.

Other experts said taping doors so they wouldn't look—and then retaping one of them after the tape had been removed by a security guard—could only happen in a Keystone Kops comedy.

Further, the experts said, it is relatively easy for the federal government to trace large denomination bills with consecutive serial num-

bers. Cash totaling \$6,500, most in \$100 bills, was taken from the suspect.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing keeps a record of what bills are sent to which banks, these experts said and any large cash withdrawals from such a bank would be easy to spot.

As for the equipment found a Democratic head-

quarters, one expert said microphones the size of half dollars, suction cups, and transmitters of the size described all went out in the 1950s.

"What the hell do they need six flashlight batteries for" he said. "They can get one battery the size of your little finger that would

give nine volts for a much longer period."

'Bug' Caper