

Florida Officials Tell of GOP 'Bug'

New York

State officials in Florida claim they have evidence that the Democratic party's headquarters at its national convention in Miami Beach last year was bugged by Republican saboteurs less than one month after the Watergate burglary was discovered, NBC News reported last night.

The network quoted Richard Gerstein, the state prosecutor in the Miami area, as saying the information about "secret listening devices" came from convicted Watergate conspirator James McCord. However, McCord has denied this, NBC said.

"The Florida investigators believe this operation was part of the espionage plan submitted by G. Gordon Liddy, later convicted as Watergate conspirator, and they say that special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox has asked them to delay prosecution because it might interfere with his work," NBC said.

HOTEL

In an interview broadcast on the "NBC Nightly News," Gerstein said: "Based on information we received during a an interrogation of James McCord last summer, we learned that the Fountainsbleau Hotel (the Democratic National Committee's headquarters in Miami Beach) had been bugged during the Democratic national convention and possibly at other times. This bugging was the result of a meeting that took place at Key Biscayne on March 30, 1972, a meeting attended by former Attorney General John Mitchell and others, at which time the entire Watergate conspiracy was planned.

"Evidently, they wanted to bug important persons in the Democratic party to find out what was happening in

the way of political action and what was happening during the convention. We have every reason to believe that they successfully carried out this mission. It was political espionage, but it involved much more than 'dirty tricks.' It involved illegal bugging, which is a crime in this state."

ARRESTS

Martin Dardis, Gerstein's chief investigator, told NBC that since Hunt, Liddy, McCord and four Miami area men "were arrested" trying to bug Democratic headquarters in Washington in June, then if the Miami Beach bugging did take place in July, "obviously it had to be carried out by somebody else."

Hunt and Liddy, however, were not arrested with the June 17, 1972. They fled from a nearby command post before police arrived and were not charged until September.

Dardis said state officials believe they know who took part in the Miami Beach bugging, but they are withholding criminal action against the suspects as part of the agreement with Cox's office.

The bugging operation was conducted from a ninth-floor apartment in the Octagon Towers, a building just across from convention hall, Gerstein and Dardis said.

United Press