

Key to Watergate Puzzle:

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White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, the man who controls the flow of both paper and people to the President, is losing his cherished anonymity as his name becomes entangled in the Watergate affair.

The Senate has established a special select committee to investigate the Watergate bugging and other related acts of political espionage and sabotage and a federal grand jury has renewed its inquiry.

Sources familiar with both investigations say that final understanding of the widespread undercover campaign activities of the 1972 Nixon campaign is largely dependent on determining Haldeman's role in those events.

These are the known elements about the President's No. 1 aide and the Watergate, as pieced together from sources in the FBI, Justice Department, White House, Senate, the Committee for the Re-election of the President and the Republican Party:

- To date, investigators have developed no hard evidence involving Haldeman in the electronic eavesdropping at the Watergate or other illegal activities.

- Haldeman told an off-the-record meeting with some Republican congressman last month that he personally ordered the "surveillance" of Democratic presidential candidates, including the taping of their speeches and public statements, adding that the operation somehow "got out of hand." (One congressman at the meeting said he took this to mean that Haldeman acknowledged setting up the operation from which the Watergate bugging stemmed.)

- Haldeman effective

Nixon Aide H.R.

Haldeman

ran the President's re-election committee, a creation of the White House and put his own trusted aides in most of the key positions of responsibility there.

- Most of the men alleged to have played central roles in a broad campaign of political espionage and sabotage — among them former presidential appointments secretary Dwight L. Chapin, deputy Nixon campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder, and former presidential assistant Gordon Strachan — had previously worked directly under Haldeman and owed their positions and loyalty to him and the President.

- Haldeman was one of five persons authorized to approve disbursements of campaign funds from the account that financed the Watergate bugging and other political espionage; the key recipients of large bulk payments from that fund were his own lieutenants. The White House has denied that Haldeman controlled disbursements from the fund.

During a campaign strategy meeting in late

1971, Haldeman told then-Attorney General John N. Mitchell that certain security operations then under White House and Justice Department jurisdiction should be transferred to the Committee for the Re-election of the President. One result of that decision was the transfer of Watergate conspirators G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr. from the White House staff where they investigated news leaks, to the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

- Three of the four men named by convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. as allegedly having advance knowledge of the bugging are present or former Haldeman assistants. Based on hearsay information he said he received from coconspirators Liddy and Hunt, McCord testified to the Senate committee that Magruder, presidential counsel John W. Dean III and former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson had advance knowledge of the illegal electronic surveillance. All three have

denied any involvement or knowledge of the bugging.

• Since the arrest of five men inside Democratic headquarters on June 17, Haldeman—with President Nixon, former Attorney General Mitchell and White House Counsel Dean—have been almost the sole architects of the White House response and denials of the allegations loosely gathered under the term "Watergate."

According to sources in the Nixon administration and federal law enforcement agencies, the Watergate bugging stemmed from a broad campaign of political espionage and sabotage conceived in the White House in 1971, before President Nixon emerged as the clear favorite to be re-elected.

Several sources, including past and present members of the White House staff, have said that the clandestine activities represented a basic strategy to attempt to determine the person the Democrats would nominate as their presidential candidate.

The disruptions and surveillance were designed first to derail the presidential candidacy of Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), regarded by the White House as the most serious potential threat to unseat the President, according to the sources.

The White House, particularly in the person of Haldeman, looked on Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), the eventual Democratic nominee, as the easiest opponent to beat and attempted to gear the undercover campaign toward that end, the sources said.

Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) was reportedly the second choice of the White House, should the strategy fail in its principal objective of getting McGovern nominated.

Last fall, one highly placed source in the Justice Department described the

overall, well-financed program of espionage and sabotage as "a Haldeman operation." Since then, others have used virtually the same description, including a former White House official and member of the Nixon campaign high command who said:

"Most of it (the espionage) came out of the White House, out of you-know-where at the White House — Haldeman's office." He added: "I still don't think Bob knew about the bugging . . . That's when the real zealots took over."

Because Haldeman traditionally insulates himself from most direct involvement in controversial enterprises ("He never really 'runs' anything to the extent of becoming involved in line activity," says one colleague; "he always spins it out to somebody else"), investigators have not been optimistic about determining his exact role in the Watergate affair.

At the very least, hard information known thus far to investigators puts Haldeman on the fringes of the Nixon campaign's undercover activities; including a surveillance network, financed by at least \$235,000 in campaign funds. The Nixon re-election committee maintains the surveillance effort was intended to collect information about radical demonstrators, not regular Democrats.

The prosecution at the Watergate trial accepted the committee's explanation—articulated on the witness stand by Magruder, Haldeman's former chief assistant—that a "legal" and "ethical" surveillance operation aimed at radicals was expanded by the overzealous Watergate conspirators to include Democratic presidential candidates and the use of illegal electronic surveillance. High-level FBI and Justice Department sources have long been skeptical of the committee's version of what happened.

Yet, if as some White House sources and investigators contend, Haldeman was at the very center of the broad espionage and sabotage campaign, it does not necessarily follow that he had knowledge of the Watergate bugging and

other attempts at illegal electronic surveillance.

Many investigators have considered it likely that either the principal Watergate conspirators or presidential aides in the White House or re-election committee thought they could please Haldeman or President Nixon by expanding the broad mandate to conduct intelligence-gathering operations and never revealing that information was being obtained through electronic eavesdropping.

And, at the highest levels of the federal investigation into the bugging of Democratic headquarters, some believe that the Watergate conspirators were vaguely authorized to use "whatever means necessary" to gather intelligence, with the tacit understanding that the me-

thods of gaining information would never be explicitly disclosed to their superiors.

Sources inside the White House, as well as federal investigators, maintain that only Haldeman, and perhaps a half-dozen other men close to him and the President, can definitively answer such questions at this point.

And not only have the President, Haldeman and others high in the White House chain of command refused to answer press inquiries, but Mr. Nixon has said that his present and former aides will not appear before any "formal session" of the Senate's select committee investigating the Watergate allegations.

Even inside the Executive Mansion, where the most sensitive topics are often quietly discussed at the White House mess, knowledge about the Watergate since the June 17 break-in at Democratic headquarters has been strictly on a need-to-know basis, with many high-level presidential assistants left completely in the dark, according to two White House officials.

"The Watergate has put a pall over our business," explained one of the President's principal aides. Another added: "We get most of our information from the newspapers. We're just as surprised as everybody else when we pick up the paper and find out what's been happening."

Haldeman, who perhaps

more than any single person could throw some light on the curtain of secrecy, indicated in his meeting with the Republican congressmen that the surveillance operation "got out of hand," according to congressional sources.

Haldeman "gave the impression" that his order to conduct "surveillance"—reportedly his term for the activity—included instructions

to monitor the movements of candidates, according to one person who attended the unusual 5 p.m. meeting on March 28 between Haldeman and the Wednesday Group of 25 Republican congressmen.

At the meeting, Haldeman said he wanted tapes of everything the Democratic presidential candidates said about the issues and each other, a participant said, and quoted Haldeman as stating: "I wanted those tapes."

Several congressmen who attended the meeting said that Haldeman also told them that the White House has seriously mismanaged its response to the Watergate affair and is now uncertain how to proceed. One source said that Haldeman, with elaborating, indicated that the President hopes to take the "offensive" on the issue in the near future.

Haldeman reportedly appeared before another group of congressional Republicans recently. Capitol Hill sources said that to their knowledge Haldeman has never previously held such meetings, and they interpreted it as a sign that the White House is deeply shaken both about Watergate's effects on the public and on the President's relations with Congress.

The Wednesday Group arranged an appearance by Haldeman only after putting out an urgent request through House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.), according to the sources. They said the Watergate was the last topic discussed and took up only about 10 minutes of the 1½-hour meeting.

"Haldeman seemed perplexed about the entire subject," according to one participant who observed that the White House chief of staff didn't seem to fit the

"tough, all-business reputation he has."

One of the congressmen present quoted Haldeman as telling the Wednesday Group the following: "One morning I picked up The (Washington) Post and they said I controlled money from some secret fund. Across the breakfast table, my wife said, 'Bob is this true?' I said we had some funds and it probably was, but I'd have to go down and check. Well, I checked and discovered that The Post had messed it up and I was happy to come back and tell my wife and children that it wasn't true."

The reference apparently was to an Oct. 25 report in The Washington Post that identified Haldeman as one of five presidential aides who controlled disbursements from a cash fund of hundreds of thousands of dollars used to finance political espionage and sabotage activities, and kept in the safe of former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, the Nixon campaign finance chairman.

In its report, The Post had made an incorrect attribution to grand jury testimony by one of his former White House assistants, Nixon committee treasurer Hugh W. Sloan Jr. This apparently was the allusion made by Haldeman to the report being "messed . . . up" by The Post.

Highly placed sources in both the Justice Department and the Committee for the Re-election of the President have subsequently reconfirmed the substance of the account, and in the words of one person with first-hand knowledge of the operation of the fund, identified Haldeman as "the guiding hand" behind the expenditures from the fund.

From that fund, Magruder, who was Haldeman's hand-picked choice to serve as interim manager of the Nixon re-election campaign until it was taken over by John Mitchell, authorized the payment of more than \$200,000 to convicted Watergate conspirator Liddy.

In addition, Liddy received an additional \$35,000 from the fund from another former member of Halde-



Associated Press

White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

man's White House staff, Herbert L. Porter, later the scheduling director for the Nixon campaign.

In addition to Haldeman and Magruder, according to the sources, those authorized to approve disbursements from the fund—which cumulatively totaled almost \$1 million during its existence—were Mitchell, Stans and Herbert W. Kalmbach, President Nixon's personal attorney and finance chairman of the campaign before Stans left the Commerce Department in early 1972.

It was Kalmbach, a Newport Beach, Calif., attorney, brought into the Nixon inner circle by Haldeman more than a decade ago, who acknowledged to the FBI that he paid more than \$30,000 from the fund to Donald H. Segretti, an agent

provocateur allegedly hired by the White House to conduct spying and sabotage operations against the primary campaigns of Democratic presidential candidates.

In his statement to the

FBI, Kalmbach said he was told to make the arrangements for paying Segretti by Chapin, then president Nixon's appointments secretary and Haldeman's closest White House deputy. Chapin, a protege of Haldeman at the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency who reported to the President and Haldeman at the White House, resigned his post this winter, some four months after published reports first alleged that he hired Segretti.

"Haldeman trusts Dwight further than anyone else," a White House colleague commented shortly after the Segretti-Chapin connection was first reported. "Dwight could never have gotten into this without Bob's approval."

Haldeman's principal White House political aide during the 1972 campaign, Gordon Strachan, has also left the presidential staff in the wake of news reports linking him to the hiring of Segretti, a University of Southern California classmate of Chapin.

According to federal investigative sources, Strachan put Watergate conspirator Liddy in touch with Segretti to merge two political spying and sabotage operations that until then were nominally separate—one run by Hunt and Liddy at the Nixon re-election committee, and the other involving Segretti and the White House.

Strachan served as Haldeman's political liaison with Jeb Stuart Magruder and the re-election committee. "Accusing Strachan," said one White House aide last fall, "would be like accusing a secretary who took a letter as being part of a conspiracy. He is Haldeman's runner"—a view shared by other sources at the White House and the re-election committee.

The sameday that Haldeman appeared on Rapiol Till, Rolson, the former presidential special counsel was named in OcRord's hearsay testimony as one of those allegedly having advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging.

Rolson was a principal architect of the 1972 Nixon campaign strategy who reported directly to the President and Haldeman before leaving the White House staff last month.

On March 30, 1972, Colson's political aide at the White House, W. Richard Howard, wrote a memo to Haldeman's "office manager," White House staff secretary Bruce Kehrli. The memo, according to FBI sources, described Hunt—who was hired as a White House consultant on Colson's recommendation—as "very effective for us" and formally recommended that he be shifted to the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

Kehrli and another White House assistant took the

contents of the safe to Dean's office. Dean kept the material (which included electronic equipment and instruction booklets) for at least six days before turning it over to the FBI.

According to court papers filed by Hunt, two notebooks—said by his attorneys to contain names and addresses that could have been used as investigative tools in the Watergate probe—were not among the items received by the FBI.

During the period while Dean was holding the material from Hunt's safe, he told an FBI agent that he did not know whether Hunt had a White House office, prompting Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray to tell the Senate Judiciary Committee that Dean probably

led to the bureau.

In the wake of June 17 break-in at the Watergate, President Nixon has said he appointed Dean to conduct a White House investigation to determine if members of the presidential staff were involved in the bugging operation.

That investigation, which absolved all then-current White House personnel, was "a direct pipeline to Haldeman," according to one of the few Justice Department officials familiar with its details.

Watergate conspirator McCord, during his appearance before the Senate select committee, was asked if he knew whether Haldeman had anything to do with the Watergate bugging, and replied: "I have no knowledge of it, no knowledge of it if he did."

Nonetheless, several newspapers mistakenly reported that McCord had implicated Haldeman.

Meanwhile, Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.), a freshman senator and member of the Watergate select committee, cited highly placed Republican Party sources and charged last week that Haldeman had condoned the Nixon campaign's overall espionage and sabotage operations.

The result, said Weicker, was "an almost competitive attitude as to who could do the dirtiest deed" at the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Demanding Haldeman's resignation, Weicker said the White House chief of staff "clearly has to accept responsibility" for what occurred during the campaign.

But last Wednesday, Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.), chairman of the Senate committee on Watergate, issued a statement about Haldeman that Senate sources said was designed to keep his committee clear of any innuendo in its investigation. Said Ervin:

"In the interest of fairness and justice, the committee wishes to state publicly that as of this time it has received no evidence of any nature linking Mr. Haldeman with any illegal activities in connection with the presidential campaign of 1972."