

Hunt: 'I Set About Creating 2

PM 8/73
Following is the text of E. Howard Hunt's testimony before a federal grand jury in Washington, D.C., last month:

Cables Which Bore on That Period'

By Mr. Silbert [Assistant U.S. attorney Earl Silbert]:

Q. Mr. Hunt, you're still under oath.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you'll notice that we have changed reporters.

A. Yes, sir.

Q: Mr. Hunt, you referred, at the start of your testimony—you made a reference to a "bag job." Does that mean a burglary?

A. That means an entry operation. It's a term used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Q. Now, while you worked at the White House, were you ever a participant or did you ever have knowledge of any other so-called "bag job" or entry operations?

A. No, sir.

Q. Were you aware of or did you participate in any other what might commonly be referred to as illegal activities?

A. Illegal?

Q. Yes, sir.

A. I have no recollection of any, no, sir.

Q. What about clandestine activities?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right. What about that?

A. I'm not quibbling, but there's quite a difference between something that's illegal and something that's clandestine.

Q. Well, in your terminology, would the entry into Mr. Felding's [Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, Lewis Fielding] office have been clandestine, illegal, neither or both?

A. I would simply call it an entry operation conducting under the auspices of competent authority.

A. Well, it would not be classified as clandestine?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right. Now, did you ever engage in any other clandestine operation?

A. Not of that type, no, sir.

Q. What type did you engage in?

A. The only other one that comes to mind has to do with the widely publicized fraudulent Vietnamese cable.

Q. Tell us about that?

A. Which to my knowledge is not an illegal activity.

Q. What did you do?

A. During the course of the researches, which I performed with the help of the Department of State, going over many hundreds of cables, comparing them with what actually appeared in the Ellsberg so-called, Pentagon Papers.

It became clear to me, from the State Department files, that a number of cables were missing. And that is to say that the chronological files did not contain cables in chronological sequence.

Some of the micro-file—well, they weren't on micro-file, but they were greatly reduced in size, approximately three by four inches

from an eight—about half size reduced.

But these small aversions had been extracted so that there was not a complete chronology of the period of the Vietnam war immediately prior to and subsequent to the assassination of then-Premier Diem.

This encourage me to have inquiries made at the Central Intelligence Agency as to whether or not their chronological files for 1963 were still intact. I wanted to obtain legal access to their files to see whether or not any of these chinks in the assassination story could be filled in through reference to CIA traffic.

I was told that the Communications Office of the Central Intelligence Agency did not maintain their chronological files for that period of time. I think that more than five years had elapsed and they had been destroyed, not stored at the Department of State.

I also had occasion to inquire—or I had inquiries made of the Pentagon as to whether the so-called back channel had been utilized for any of its missing traffic and was told that no copies had been kept at the Pentagon of this type of traffic that might have taken place between. Let's say, the commanding general in Saigon and the chief of staff to Washington.

I also, with some difficulty, managed to obtain the State Department's file. It was a State Department back channel. It was Secretary of State to the Ambassador, back and forth, and I went through that, satisfied myself that there was nothing of substance in there but, at the same time, I had concluded that a lot of significant traffic was missing.

And there came a time when I mentioned this to Mr. Colson, who I had been directing my researches into the—at the particular period—the Vietnamese war, and told him that, in my opinion, a lot of stuff that should have been there had been extracted.

He said, "How do you account for that?" And I said, "Well, some of the cables that they still have on hand at the Department of State have been sent, with date stamps, saying photographed or duplicated for the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library."

So I said, "Well, obviously, anybody who had been given access to the Department of State file for the purposes of incorporating them into material held by the J. F. K. Library would also have had oppor-

tunity to remove any cables that could have been embarrassing to the Kennedy legates.

And he said, "Well, what kind of material have you dug up on the files that would indicate Kennedy complicity?" And I showed him three or four cables that indicated that they had pretty close to pulled the trigger against Premier Diem's head, but it didn't say so in so many words. Inferentially, one could say

there was a high degree of administration complicity in the actual assassination of Diem and his brother."

And he said, "Well, this isn't good enough. Do you think that you could improve on them?"

I said, "Yes, I probably could, but not without technical assistance." After all, I had been given some training in my past CIA career to do just this sort of thing

and had done it successfully on numerous occasions, floating forged newspaper accounts, telegrams, that sort of thing.

So he said, "Well, we won't be able to give you any technical help. This is too hot. See what you can do on your own."

So, with the very meager means at my disposal, which were literally a Xerox machine in the White House, a razor blade and a typewriter—which was not the same one as had been used on the original cables—I set about creating two cables which bore on that particular period.

The process was relatively simple. I first of all prepared a cable text. In other words, from many of these cables I could pretty well adjust the text to the type of language that would be used by the man who was the ostensible originator, and altered these, from time to time, until I was satisfied that I had two creditable cables.

Then the problem came of getting the bottom line, which had the signatures of the releasing reviewing officers and the originating officers and the heading, which had also the time date

stamp on it, which was a crucial thing.

And simply by Xeroxing and re-Xeroxing, I substituted a test for what had previously been a legitimate cable and could use those.

I was not satisfied with the results. I showed them to Colson. He seemed to like them and I said, "These will never stand any kind of scrutiny." I said, "Let's be very sure about that."

And I had asked the FBI to tell me what kind of type face had been used on the original State Department cables and actually a White House cable, because one of them was ostensibly a White House cable, and I found out that it would be impossible for me to get access to a similar type face.

So I knew that this was a technical problem that could not be overcome. So if anybody was going to see these cables, they'd simply have to see them. They could never be published, because after the Alger Hiss case, everyone was typewriter conscious.

So there would just have to be a fast-brush show on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, which I began to believe was the purpose Mr. Colson had in mind.

Not long after I completed these two cables, I got a call from them saying, "There will be a fellow over to see you. I've given him your name. He'll give you a call. His name is Bill Lambert from Time-Life and I want you to talk to him about these cables. Show him these cables. If you want to show him, show them to him up, in your office at the White House, if you want to," he said. "But don't let them get out of your hands."

In due course, Mr. Lambert made contact with me. I believe we spoke first in my office at Mullen Company and we may, on that occasion, have gone directly from Mullen Company over to my office in the Executive Office Building where, to the best of my recollection, I showed him the stack of cables; extracted three or four that I had paper-clipped, including the two that I had fabricated.

Mr. Lambert was quite exultant over the find. Wanted to know if he couldn't take them immediately. I, obvi-

ously, said, "No, you may not, but you may read the text. If you care to, you may copy the text down."

So he spent some time in copying them down on a yellow pad and he never saw the cables again, but he was in constant contact with myself and, I believe, the office of Mr. Colson, trying to obtain facsimiles of the two fabricated cables.

Mr. Colson simply referred him to me and I said I was simply unable to release them to him.

Q. Now, do you know of any other clandestine operations?

A. I can't think of any, sir.