

HUNT LINKS COLSON TO PLAN THAT LED TO 1972 BREAK-IN

But Says He Does Not Think
That Ex-Nixon Aide Knew in
Advance of Watergate

TESTIMONY AT HEARING

Ex-C.I.A. Agent Tells Senate
Panel of Undercover Work
for the White House

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 24—E. Howard Hunt Jr. told the Senate Watergate committee as it resumed public hearings today that Charles W. Colson, the former White House special counsel, had been aware early last year of the "large-scale" intelligence scheme that led to the Watergate break-in.

Hunt, one of seven men who pleaded guilty or were con-

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portion of hearing.

victed for their roles in the burglary and bugging of the Democratic party headquarters, said at the same time that he had no information to suggest that Mr. Colson had specific advance knowledge of the actual break-in on June 17, 1972.

The Senate hearings resumed today much as they had recessed seven weeks ago with the committee seeking to complete its inquiry into the Watergate espionage case so that it could move on to its examination of campaign sabotage and financing.

Tells of Undercover Work

Hunt, a former spy for the Central Intelligence Agency and author of a number of spy novels under pseudonyms, sat dispassionately at the witness table as he recounted—

occasionally in a barely audible voice and frequently after hushed consultation with his lawyer, Sidney S. Sachs—the undercover activities that he had engaged in for the Nixon White House.

He said that a Sept. 3, 1971, burglary at the office of a California psychiatrist treating Dr. Daniel Ellsberg failed to produce material that could be used to discredit Dr. Ellsberg. He described the fabrication, at Mr. Colson's behest, of a diplomatic cable in an effort to suggest complicity by President Kennedy in the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam.

Hunt told the Senate panel of an aborted plan to steal political documents from the safe of a Las Vegas, Nev., publisher with the aide of associates of Howard Hughes, the reclusive billionaire.

Effort Against Kennedys

He testified about a fruitless effort, using a disguise and false credentials supplied by the C.I.A., to obtain derogatory information about the Kennedy family from a one-time acquaintance of the family in Hyannis Port, Mass. He described his contacts last year with two undercover agents, one known to him only as "Fat Jack," who

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had been planted inside the headquarters of Democratic Presidential candidates by the Committee for the Reelection of the President.

And Hunt, sounding like the "burnt out case" of a Graham Greene character who had wandered into the plot of a Fletcher Knebel mystery, detailed the destruction of his life: He spoke of having been physically attacked and having suffered a stroke in his six months in jail; of concern for the "poor, motherless children" orphaned by his imprisonment and the death of his wife, Dorothy, in a plane crash last December; of the "enormous financial burden" of his legal defense, and of having been "crushed by the failure of my Government to protect me and

my family, as in the past it has always done for its clandestine agents."

For all that, the Senate committee was preoccupied, in its first day-long interrogation of Hunt, with his recollections of his association with Mr. Colson.

Says Colson Hired Him

Hunt testified that it was Mr. Colson who had enlisted him to work for the White House and to whom he had reported on most matters. He said that in January, 1971, he advised Mr. Colson that most of his time would thereafter be taken up at the President's re-election committee, where he was working with G. Gordon Liddy, one of the convicted Watergate conspirators, on a large-scale political intelligence plan.

According to Hunt, Mr. Colson "indicated that he was aware of the over-all intelligence plan and his only problem with it was that he would much prefer me, [to] see me heading it rather than Mr. Liddy."

Furthermore, Hunt told Samuel Dash, the committee's chief counsel, that sometime in February of last year he had introduced Liddy to Mr. Colson and that Liddy had subsequently said the meeting "may have done us some good" in getting the intelligence plan under way.

David L. Shapiro, Mr. Colson's lawyer and law partner, said later today that there would be

no immediate comment on Hunt's new allegations. The Senate panel had intended to call Mr. Colson as its first witness today, but consented last week to put off his appearance indefinitely because Mr. Colson said he had been advised he was a "target" of a Federal grand jury investigation of the Ellsberg burglary.

Earlier Statements by Hunt

Hunt had told the Senate investigators in May that Mr. Colson was not connected to the Watergate case and the committee had obtained transcripts of conversations in which Hunt appeared to make the same point to Mr. Colson.

But Hunt testified today that he had only recently recalled the January, 1972 conversation linking Mr. Colson to advance knowledge of the Gemstone intelligence plan, as it was known.

He said that the discussion

After the burglars were caught, Hunt said, he went to the White House and deposited in his safe some electronic equipment belonging to McCord and removed from the safe \$10,000 of "contingency" funds that he made available for bail bonds for the arrested burglars. He said that Liddy had told him to leave town and that he had gone to California after advising Mr. Colson's secretary that his White House safe "is loaded."

Hunt told Fred D. Thompson, the chief Republican counsel, that after five years in the military and 21 years in the C.I.A., "following orders without question," he had never thought to question the legality or propriety of the Watergate break-in.

In the prepared statement that he read to the Senators, peering at them over the top of reading glasses, Hunt voiced regret at having lacked "the wisdom to withdraw."

"At the same time," he continued, "I cannot escape feeling that the country I have served for my entire life and which directed me to carry out the Watergate entry is punishing me for the very thing it trained and directed me to do."



Associated Press

Charles W. Colson was the White House official who hired Mr. Hunt.



Associated Press

Senators Howard H. Baker Jr., left, vice chairman, and Sam J. Ervin Jr., chairman of the Watergate committee, listening to the testimony of E. Howard Hunt Jr. yesterday.

had been "brought back to my mind" by the line of questioning taken by Mr. Dash in one of a number of private interviews that preceded Hunt's testimony today.

The committee made public the text of an Aug. 9, 1972, letter from Hunt to Mr. Colson, in which the former spy expressed regret at "your being dragged into the case through association with me, superficial and occasional though the association was."

Taped Phone Conversation

The panel also made a part of its record a transcript of a taped telephone conversation between the two, sometime in November of last year. Throughout the transcript, Mr. Colson advised Hunt not to give him details of his involvement in the Watergate case, saying that he could be of greater assistance by remaining "as unknowing as I am."

The November conversation was one of several Hunt overtures intended to get swifter, and more munificent, financial assistance for the Watergate defendants.

Hunt denied the allegation of several previous Senate witnesses that he had threatened to disclose details of his White House undercover assignments — "seamy activities," he called them today — unless more money and promises of Presidential clemency were forthcoming.

He testified, however, that he had described the activities to Paul L. O'Brien, one of the lawyers for Mr. Nixon's reelection committee, and to Mr. Shapiro. After meeting Mr. Shapiro in February, Hunt said, he received \$75,000 in cash in an envelope delivered anonymously to the home of his former lawyer, William O. Bittman.

Calls Break-ins 'Lawful'

Hunt told the committee that he had believed the Watergate break-ins, on May 27 and June 17 of last year, were "unwise" but "lawful." He said that they had been designed to obtain information that might support a rumored contribution of campaign funds from the Government of Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba to the Democratic party.

Adding to the previously known details of the burglary that went awry, Hunt testified that he proposed to "junk" the operation on June 17 after the conspirators discovered that tape they had placed on the door locks at the Watergate complex had been removed. But Hunt said that Liddy and another convicted conspirator, James W. McCord Jr., had decided to go ahead with the operation.