

Hunt Says He Fabricated Cables on Diem

Testifies Colson Sought To Alienate Democrats

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 24—E. Howard Hunt Jr. said today that he had fabricated State Department cables to show a link between President Kennedy and the assassination of the President of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, a Roman Catholic, to estrange Catholic voters from the Democratic party.

Hunt told the Senate Watergate Committee that he had forged the cables on orders from Charles W. Colson, then a special counsel to President Nixon, after Mr. Colson had "suggested that I might be able to improve upon the record."

It was Mr. Colson's desire, Hunt testified, "to demonstrate that a Catholic U. S. Administration had, in fact, conspired in the assassination of a Catholic chief of state of another country."

The existence of the bogus cables became known last May during the Pentagon papers trial in Los Angeles. Among many documents released at that time was Hunt's testimony before the Watergate grand jury, in which he described how he had fabricated the cables.

The existence of the cables became known last spring, and Hunt's contention that Mr. Colson had ordered that they be written was disclosed in May during the Pentagon papers trial in Los Angeles. Among many documents released at that time was Hunt's testimony before the Watergate grand jury, in which he described how he fabricated the cables.

Hunt's statement today was the first explanation of why Mr. Colson allegedly asked him to write phony cables.

Mr. Colson denied last May that he ordered Hunt to forge the cables, stating, however, that Hunt might have "misunderstood something I said to him." Hunt's lawyer, David I. Shapiro, said today that Mr. Colson had nothing to add to that statement.

Hunt, who has been in jail since he pleaded guilty last January to planning the Watergate burglary, said today that the main reason he had been hired by Mr. Colson for the White House staff was his background in covert intelligence work.

Before he was hired, Hunt testified, Mr. Colson questioned him at length about his views on Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, who was reportedly the person who allowed the Pentagon papers to become public.

The committee obtained a tape of a telephone conversation of early July, 1971, which Mr. Colson recorded, in which Mr. Colson asked Hunt whether he thought "with the right resources employed that this thing could be turned into a major public case against Ellsberg."

Hunt responded that he thought it could be, and according to Hunt, Mr. Colson arranged for him to be added to the White House as a consultant.

Almost immediately, Hunt testified, "through a process resembling osmosis almost," he began to devote a large portion of his time to the White House special investigating unit known as the "plumbers" because the unit's assignment was to plug leaks of information to the press.

He was working for the plumbers, he said, when he organized the burglary of the office of Dr. Ellsberg's former psychiatrist, Dr. Lewis Fielding, on Sept. 3, 1971.

Hunt left no doubt during his testimony today that he felt the principal reason for that burglary was to find information that would discredit Dr. Ellsberg rather than material

that might be of national security significance.

He also suggested, although he did not say so directly, that Mr. Colson and John D. Ehrlichman, the former White House domestic affairs adviser, had known in advance about the burglary of the psychiatrist's office.

On July 28, 1971, Hunt wrote a memorandum to Mr. Colson entitled "neutralization of Ellsberg," proposing what he called "a skeletal operations plan aimed at building a file on Ellsberg that will contain all available overt, covert and derogatory information."

The memorandum, which was released by the committee, said that "this basic tool is essential in determining how to destroy his image and credibility." Among Hunt's proposals was to "obtain Ellsberg's files from his psychiatric analyst."

Asked whether that meant that it might be necessary to break into the psychiatrist's office, Hunt replied that it did.

Hunt said that the week after the burglary at Dr. Fielding's office in Beverly Hills, Calif., he attempted to show Mr. Colson Polaroid snapshots taken inside the office.

Mr. Colson refused to look at the pictures, Hunt testified, and remarked, "I don't want to hear anything about it."

Mr. Colson has in the past denied having had advance knowledge of the burglary. He refused to make an additional comment today.

The committee also released a memorandum from Mr. Ehrlichman to Mr. Colson, dated Aug. 27, 1971, entitled "Hunt-Liddy special project No. 1." The memorandum stated:

"On the assumption that the proposed undertaking by Hunt and Liddy would be successful, I would appreciate receiving from you by next Wednesday a game plan as to how and when you believe the materials should be used."

Hunt said that he assumed that Mr. Ehrlichman was talking about the entry into Dr. Fielding's office.

Mr. Ehrlichman is under indictment in California on charges of having conspired to break into the doctor's office. Hunt cooperated with the prosecution in that case and, in return, was not indicted.

Mr. Ehrlichman insisted in his testimony before the Watergate committee last July that he knew of plans for a "covert operation" to obtain the psychiatric files but did not know that the operation involved a burglary.

In the case of the bogus cables and the Ellsberg burglary, Hunt testified, it was contemplated that material that might be beneficial politically to the Nixon Administration would be leaked to the press. Hunt even went so far, he said, as to compile a list of newsmen who, he thought, might be receptive to the material.

The forged cables, he said, were shown to William Lambert, then a reporter for Life magazine, who was close to Mr. Colson. Hunt said that Mr. Colson had given him instructions to let Mr. Lambert copy the documents by hand but not to let him make photo copies of them because they could not withstand professional scrutiny. Mr. Lambert never wrote about the documents.

The cables were removed by Nixon Administration officials from Hunt's safe in June, 1972, after he was implicated in the Watergate burglary. They were among the materials turned over to L. Patrick Gray 3d, then acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Gray has testified that he burned the documents last December.

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to Link Kennedy to Killing of a Catholic