

# DEFENDANT SEEKS TO PLEAD GUILTY IN BUGGING TRIAL

## Judge Weighs Hunt Offer to Enter Plea on 3 of 6 Watergate Charges

### PROSECUTOR GIVES CASE

#### Government Gives Details of Republican Effort to Spy on Democrats

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 10—E.

Howard Hunt Jr., a onetime White House consultant who became a central figure in the Watergate affair, offered today to plead guilty to charges that he conspired to spy on the Democrats last year.

Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court here reserved a decision on whether to accept Mr. Hunt's plea until tomorrow morning. He could order Mr. Hunt to stand trial, and he warned the defendant that he was accustomed to putting those who plead guilty in jail at once.

Mr. Hunt's attorneys said that he would plead guilty to conspiracy, to one count of second-degree burglary and to one count of wiretapping at the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate apartment-office complex here.

The prosecutor implied, and Government sources subsequently confirmed, that three other counts also charging burglary and eavesdropping would be withdrawn by the Government. Mr. Hunt would thus not appear at the trial.

#### Narrower Scope Unlikely

Lawyers for all six other defendants said that Mr. Hunt's move would have no effect on their clients' positions. Since all were charged under the con-



E. Howard Hunt Jr. during court break yesterday.

spiracy and related counts of the indictment, it appeared that the scope of the trial would not be reduced by Mr. Hunt's action.

The Government, outlining its case in detail for the first

time, earlier told a jury that President Nixon's campaign organization had paid one of Mr. Hunt's co-defendants \$235,000 in cash for an "intelligence operation" last year.

#### Offer Ordered Delayed

The prosecution's opening statement was studded with references to paid spies in Democratic campaigns, to secret meetings in a Washington drugstore, to exchanges of many \$100 bills and to other details of its case.

William O. Bittman, an attorney for Mr. Hunt, announced afterward that his client would offer to plead guilty to three of the six charges against him and that the Government had required him to delay the offer until after the prosecution's statement.

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COVER-UP TRIAL*

Earl J. Silbert, the principal assistant United States attorney here, said that the timing had allowed him to explain his case "so that all would know the facts uncovered by the investigation."

Mr. Silbert said a second "condition" demanded by the Government was that there be no agreement on the length of

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sentence the prosecution would recommend to Judge Sirica.

Under the six counts of the indictment against Mr. Hunt, he could have been sentenced to a maximum of 35 years in

prison. Mr. Silbert said that Mr. Hunt would be subject to a 25-year maximum sentence on just the charges to which he would plead guilty.

#### Future Questioning Possible

The prosecutor also told Judge Sirica that in agreeing to Mr. Hunt's plea he had warned that the Government would seek to call the defendant before a grand jury and question him extensively about the Watergate case.

Investigators said that by the time of a grand jury inquiry, Mr. Hunt presumably would be in prison and hence would be under some pressure to cooperate. If necessary, they added, he could be granted immunity from further prosecution and forced to testify.

While the offer to plead guilty followed immediately upon Mr. Silbert's two-hour statement to the jury, there had been rumors before the trial that Mr. Hunt would seek to do so. The plan was arranged about a week ago, Mr. Bittman said.

Mr. Bittman argued at some length that the judge could allow Mr. Hunt to remain free on a \$10,000 bond pending sentencing, which probably would not take place for several weeks or months.

Mr. Hunt has appeared white-faced and grim during the three days of the proceedings. Mr. Bittman pointed out that the defendant's wife had been killed in a Chicago plane crash last month and that he had lost 14 pounds since then.

In addition, it was widely understood that Mr. Hunt, an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency for 20 years, had found the public interest in him to be extremely disagreeable.

### A Puzzling Figure

In an earlier appearance in connection with a legal proceeding, the 54-year-old Mr. Hunt fled from reporters. He wore dark glasses and a hat low on his forehead on that occasion.

For those reasons, he remained by far the most enigmatic of the defendants. And as the author of more than 40 novels and as a supposed participant in many feats of derring-do, he perhaps remained the most fascinating of the seven.

Mr. Silbert, the 36-year-old prosecution, who wears his hair long at the back and peers at his notes through horn-rimmed glasses, stood at a lectern and began his description of the case at 11:01 A.M.

He began immediately to refer to the political aspects of the Watergate affair, but while he mentioned several officials of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, he attributed lawbreaking only to the defendants.

He said that G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House and Treasury Department official who became counsel to the campaign committee in December, 1971, had at first simply given legal advice to other officials. But toward the end of that month, Mr. Silbert said, Mr. Liddy met with Jeb S. Magruder, deputy director of the committee, and Herbert L. Porter, the scheduling chief, and from them received "two additional assignments."

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