

Watergate 'Bug' Suspect Pleads Guilty to Plotting

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White House Ex-Aide Hunt Shifts Stand

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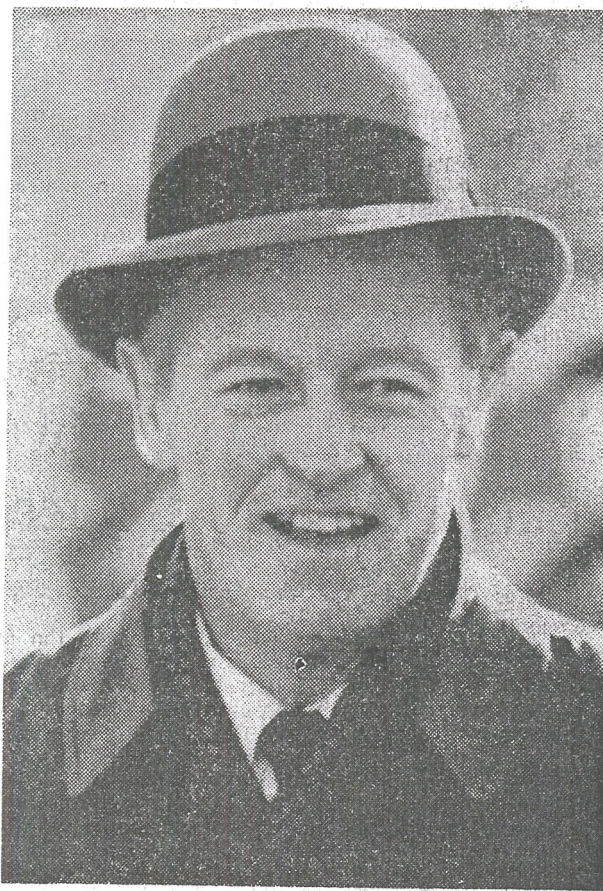
Former White House aide E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the seven defendants in the Watergate bugging trial, pleaded guilty yesterday to three counts of conspiracy, burglary and illegal wire-tapping.

Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica withheld until today a decision on whether to accept the plea.

Hunt and six other persons are charged in an eight-count indictment with breaking into the Democratic National Committee's Watergate headquarters on June 17 to steal information and conduct illegal wire-tapping and eavesdropping.

The announcement of Hunt's plea, to burglary, conspiracy and illegal wiretapping, was made out of the jury's presence, followed the opening statements of prosecutor Earl J. Silbert who outlined what he said was a broad campaign of surreptitious activities conducted by Hunt, his codefendant G. Gordon Liddy and others.

According to Silbert, witnesses will testify that the alleged bugging of the Democratic National Committee Watergate headquarters was only one part of a larger operation aimed at the Democrats.



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E. Howard Hunt Jr. admitted guilt in Watergate case.

Silbert told the jury that Liddy, at the time employed by the Committee for the Re-election of the President had received \$235,000 in cash from his superiors at the committee for various assignments. The prosecution can account for only \$50,000 of this sum, Silbert said.

The money, according to Silbert, was given to Liddy, then an official at the re-election committee, to carry out assignments from deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder and Herbert L. Porter, director of campaign scheduling in December 1971. Silbert said Liddy was to gather information about planned demonstrations directed at "surrogate candidates" who would be campaigning in 10 primary states for President Nixon.

For this, Silbert, whose opening remarks took two hours, said that \$100,000 allegedly was given to Liddy to be spent on salaries for 10 persons, in 10 locations, for 10 months at \$1,000-a-month.

The only information mentioned by Silbert as having been obtained by Liddy was that a leftwing demonstration could be expected in New Hampshire and a rightwing demonstration could be expected in Florida.

A second assignment Magruder gave Liddy concerned "anticipated mass demonstrations" at the Republican convention then scheduled for San Diego, Silbert said. Liddy was to look into the size, the groups that might demonstrate and their plans for demonstrations in San Diego, Silbert said.

In addition, Silbert said, Liddy received "from time to

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time other intelligence assignments." Among these was an assignment to check out a supporter, supposedly a "big polluter" who was supporting an unnamed Democratic candidate who had taken a firm stand against pollution, according to Silbert.

For this, Silbert said, Liddy was to receive \$150,000 and actually received \$135,000 until last June, when payments stopped.

Silbert said the prosecution would call witnesses who would describe the alleged efforts of Hunt and Liddy to gather information surreptitiously about the Democratic Party generally and about specific candidates and leaders, including Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), later the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for President, Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), the early front-runner for the Democratic nomination, and Lawrence F. O'Brien, then Democratic Party chairman.

Among these witnesses, according to Silbert, are:

- Jack Stewart, described as an ex-CIA agent with a background in electronics, whom Hunt knew. Silbert said Stewart met last February in Mi-

ami with Bernard Barker, also a defendant in the case, and was told by Barker that a "communications center" was planned to be located on a houseboat in Biscayne Bay during the Democratic convention.

Barker, according to Silbert, said he would "have access" to Democratic Party leaders, especially O'Brien, and that there would be "plenty of money."

Barker also showed Stewart records already obtained from the Democrats, Silbert said. Stewart, however, turned down the job, Silbert said.

- Thomas James Gregory, described by Silbert as a student at Brigham Young University, whom Hunt met through a business associate. Hunt recruited Gregory, at a salary of \$175 a week, to work as a volunteer first for Muskie, to find out Muskie's campaign schedule, the contents of speeches he would give, whether there was any dissension in the Muskie camp and who was filling important policy positions. Gregory gave Hunt weekly written reports, checking with Hunt on a daily basis by telephone, Silbert said.

In Mid-April, when Muskie's campaign faltered, Hunt told Gregory he "could be more useful elsewhere," Silbert said, and Gregory went to work for McGovern.

Silbert said that Gregory was introduced to the "boss of the operation"—G. Gordon Liddy—and met with Liddy, Hunt, McCord, Barker and the four other defendants—James W. McCord Jr., Frank Sturgis, Eugenio Martinez and Virgilio Gonzales—about May 22 or 23 to discuss breaking into McGovern's headquarters.

Gregory "decided he had had enough," Silbert said, and quit on June 15.

The third principal witness mentioned by Silbert is Alfred C. Baldwin III, and ex-FBI agent who has said publicly he was hired by McCord and ultimately ordered to monitor phone conversations in the

Democratic Party's Watergate headquarters from the Howard Johnson Motor Hotel across the street.

In all, Silbert said, Baldwin monitored about 200 telephone conversations from the phone of R. Spencer Oliver, an aide who was a liaison between the national Democratic Party and state chairmen. The calls concerned the "personal lives . . . the domestic lives . . . the political lives" of the persons talking, Silbert said.

"Some of those conversations, as you might expect, were of a sensitive nature," Silbert told the jury. "McCord made it perfectly clear to Mr. Baldwin that he was interested in conversation either personal or political that were of a sensitive nature."

Because one monitor was working improperly, Silbert said, McCord, who was security director for the Nixon reelection committee, sent Baldwin to the Democratic headquarters under a disguise to examine the layout. Baldwin, posing as the nephew of former Democratic Party Chairman John Bailey, got a "royal tour, red carpet treatment," Silbert said.

"Ironically enough," Silbert told the jury, the person conducting the tour was Oliver's secretary, Ida M. Wells, one of the persons whose calls Baldwin had monitored.

Silbert said Baldwin met Hunt and Liddy at least twice before the June 17 break-in at Democratic Party headquarters—once on May 28 while surveying McGovern headquarters and again on June 13 when they came to Baldwin's room in the Howard Johnson Motor Hotel, across the street from the Watergate.

At the June 13 meeting, Silbert said, Baldwin saw Liddy count out 16 \$100 bills for McCord. Throughout Silbert's presentation, references were made to \$100 bills. Gregory and Baldwin were paid with \$100 bills, Silbert said. Barker, Sturgis, Martinez and Gonzales were arrested inside the Watergate each with from

\$200 to \$1,300 in \$100 bills, airline tickets were paid for with \$100 bills and McCord made three \$10,000 deposits in his bank accounts, each in \$100 bills, 10 to a packet, Silbert said.

At the same time, Silbert said, Liddy was given expense money for his assignments by Hugh W. Sloan Jr., then the campaign treasurer, in \$100 bills, 10 to a packet.

On the evening of June 16, Silbert said, McCord visited Baldwin at the Howard Johnson's, gave him a walkie-talkie and told him to watch the Democratic offices in the Watergate.

Silbert recounted that Baldwin radioed an alert when he saw three men in casual clothes—metropolitan police officers—on the Watergate balcony outside the Democratic offices. The police had been called by Frank Wills, a suspicious security guard, Silbert said.

Baldwin later saw five defendants—McCord, Barker,

Sturgis, Martinez and Gonzales—being taken by police from the Watergate Office Building, Silbert said. Baldwin also saw Hunt and Liddy, carrying suitcases, leaving the adjoining Watergate Hotel, he said. Liddy was wearing "a conservative suit, as he always does, as he is today," he added.

Moments later, Hunt appeared, agitated, in Baldwin's hotel room, used the bathroom and then said, according to Silbert, "I've got to call a lawyer. I've got to call a lawyer." Hunt placed a call, spoke, and then told Baldwin to return the bugging equipment to McCord's home and "get out of town," Silbert said.

Silbert said Liddy went to the re-election committee headquarters the morning of June 17 and began shredding

papers. Silbert said Sloan saw Liddy and Liddy said, "The boys got caught last night. We made a mistake. I'll probably lose my job." Silbert said Sloan "didn't know what he (Liddy) was talking about."

Hunt, in the meantime, had gone to the Washington home of M. Douglas Caddy, also expected to be a witness, and called Barker's home in Miami about 3:30 a.m., Silbert said. Caddy started calling lawyers, finally getting Joseph A. Rafferty. Silbert said Hunt gave Caddy \$8,500, including one \$500 bill and the balance in \$100 bills.

At the second district police headquarters, where the five arrested defendants had been taken, they were advised of their rights and offered, but declined, the customary phone call. "Yet, lo and behold," Sil-

bert said, "at 10:30 Saturday morning in walked two lawyers—Michael Douglas Caddy and Joseph Rafferty. How in the world did they get there?"

Only two defense attorneys, Gerald Alch and Henry Rothblatt, made opening statements. Alch, representing McCord conceded that McCord was inside the Watergate June 17.

"The question is why was he there?" Alch said. McCord's "intent" is important, Alch said, asserting that McCord had "no criminal intent . . . He had no evil-meaning mind. He had no evil-doing hands."

Rothblatt, representing Barker, Sturgis, Martinez and Gonzales, asserted that the "character" of his clients would preclude their breaking the law. Judge Sirica, acting as the prosecution moved to

object, interrupted Rothblatt several times to direct the lawyer to restrict his statement to evidence and not make an argument to the jury. "Keep an even keel," Sirica told the emotional Rothblatt, "and don't let your blood pressure get up."

Sirica prodded Rothblatt to explain why his clients were inside the Watergate, a fact conceded by Rothblatt. "Who paid them?" Sirica asked, as he has before. "Did they get any money to go in there? Was it purely for political espionage?"

Rothblatt said that the "evidence will show that" his clients, who knew each other since the abortive anti-Castro Bay of Pigs operation in 1961 "were following instructions that they had been trained to follow, with no evil motive."