

CIA Reportedly Setup Watergate IDs

By Jack Anderson

The Watergate ringleaders apparently used phony credentials, which the Central Intelligence Agency authenticated, during their spying-sabotage operations against the Democrats.

Trusted sources have told us James McCord, while he was preparing to bug Democratic Party headquarters, flashed CIA papers identifying himself as "George Russell." Those who checked with the CIA were assured "George Russell" was a legitimate employee.

Other sources close to the Watergate investigation say that G. Gordon Liddy may also have used the same "George Russell" alias. These sources claim the FBI originally thought the Watergate break-in was a CIA operation.

The CIA, however, refused to cooperate with the FBI investigation. A memo, intended for FBI eyes only, reported: "It is recalled we specifically were requested by the CIA not to interview . . . two CIA employees, and instructions were issued to WFO [Washington Field Office] to this effect. One of the individuals had already been interviewed, and the second was not interviewed per the request of the CIA."

Another FBI memo, prepared for ex-White House Chief of staff H.R. Haldeman but never submitted to him,

noted that Hunt and Liddy had "traveled extensively around the United States contacting former CIA employees for the purpose of setting up a security organization for the Republican Party dealing with 'political espionage.'"

Both E. Howard Hunt and McCord are ex-CIA agents.

When the FBI discovered Hunt was involved in the Watergate conspiracy, agent John Rule "telephonically contacted" presidential assistant Alexander P. Butterfield for an explanation. Our sources say he was the White House liaison man with the CIA. An FBI memo states that Butterfield informed Rule that "Hunt was used . . . on 'highly sensitive, confidential matters' about nine months ago."

The first impulse of President Nixon's campaign chiefs was to blame the Watergate bugging operation on the CIA. Both Hunt and McCord balked at this suggestion and sent back angry word that they wouldn't "sit still" for this. They have testified under oath that Watergate was not a CIA operation.

But there is growing evidence of some kind of CIA involvement.

Footnote: Butterfield told my associate Joseph Spear that he doesn't remember being called by the FBI. He had "security responsibility" at the White House, he said, but was "not aware" that he was a designated CIA liaison official. McCord couldn't be reached,

and the CIA would say only that "McCord is a retired employee and normally would not carry current identification."

Gag Order

Angry senators have charged that the White House had intervened with the National Transportation Safety Board to stop the release of reports that might embarrass the Nixon administration.

The board is supposed to be an independent agency which investigates air accidents and oversees the performance of the Federal Aviation Administration. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.) believes air safety should be kept out of politics.

He got assurances from board chairman John H. Reed on March 25, 1971, that "we do not yield one iota on independence, believe me. The board is completely independent. We try to be gentlemen in working with [the White House,] but there is no intrusion beyond that independence line and if there is any influence I will be the first one up here to speak to you and members of the committee."

Magnuson has now been informed, however, that the White House ordered the board to cease issuing reports critical of the administration.

In a scalding letter, Magnuson has written Reed: "I have received allegations that de-

spite the assurance you personally provided the committee on March 25, 1971, that on March 18, 1973, you called a meeting of members of the National Transportation Safety Board to discuss communications you had received from the White House staff regarding certain lawful functions of the board.

"It has been alleged," continues the confidential letter, "on that occasion you, acting as chairman of the board, revealed that the White House staff had expressed displeasure with you and other members of the board because of certain reports and recommendations adopted and made publically by the board which were critical of the Department of Transportation and its Federal Aviation Administration."

"It has been charged that you were ordered, despite provisions of law to the contrary, to cease issuing such reports which might in any way be construed as critical of the Department of Transportation or the executive branch. Further, charges have been made that you informed members of the board that unless the board agreed to cease this activity . . . that members would be 'disciplined' by the White House."

Magnuson demanded full particulars from Reed who, when contacted by us, refused to comment.