

Miami-Watergate

Links Probed

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Two separate investigations are chipping away at a wall of secrecy surrounding Miami aspects of the Watergate scandal and related political sabotage.

Staff investigators for the Senate Watergate Committee are exploring whether Miami Cubans were involved in two additional break-ins, one in Washington and another in this city.

If a federal judge allows the Senate's televised hearings to resume today, some of the questions fired at this week's witnesses will be based on information gathered here during a weekend of

virtually non-stop interviews by two committee investigators.

State Attorney Richard Gerstein's office, meanwhile, is taking new testimony regarding alleged plans by the Watergate conspirators to disrupt last summer's Democratic and Republican conventions in Miami Beach.

GERSTEIN IS also probing the possibility that White House officials were on Key Biscayne when they approved plans for bugging the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington.

Here's where the two investigations stood Monday:

⊙ Sources close to the Senate Committee indicated that it will focus this week



Felipe DeDiego
... was questioned

on the Miami connections of the known Watergate figures, especially former White House aide E. Howard Hunt Jr.

For the time being, these

sources said, the Senate probe probably will deal narrowly with the Watergate break-in and the attempted coverup of that one crime.

But later, the focus may be expanded to include the May 13, 1972 burglary of the Chilean embassy in Washington, and the July 4, 1972 attempt to break into a safe in Gerstein's office in Miami, apparently in an unsuccessful attempt to steal files relating to Watergate.

While they were in Miami Saturday and Sunday, the Senate probes also sought to determine whether there is a Miami connection linking the Watergate operatives with the separate series of political "dirty tricks" attributed to Donald Segretti, who has

been indicted in Tampa for a phony letter that smeared three Democratic presidential candidates.

⊙ In the other investigation, Gerstein said he is negotiating with Fred Vincent Jr., attorney for former White House staffer Fred LaRue, in an attempt to work out an agreement under which LaRue may testify here.

Gerstein wants to ask LaRue about a Key Biscayne meeting at which former U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell approved the Watergate bugging, according to sworn testimony by John Ehrlichman.

Marlin Dardis, Gerstein's chief investigator, was studying a transcript of the Ehrlichman testimony Monday.

Ehrlichman's statement was made earlier in Washington.

Gerstein said he also wants to question Bernard Barker, the Miami real estate agent already convicted for the Watergate burglary. But so far, Barker's lawyer has not agreed.

⊙ Taking a different tack, Gerstein's office was preparing Monday to take new testimony from Miamians who are known to have worked with Barker on other occasion, but who were not charged in the Watergate burglary.

These persons, it was learned, may be questioned about alleged plans to use three separate teams of Miami Cubans to foment trouble at the national conventions. Such teams were described previously in sworn statements by Angelica Rojas, a Miami secretary, and Pablo Fernandez, a Miami shop clerk.

⊙ In a related development, John Ek, a former Castro agent, gun dealer, and currently a Miami private detective, told The Herald he was contacted last April by "one of the Watergate figures."

Ek said he was offered \$50,000 to "do a bugging job in Washington, D.C." The private investigator, known as an accomplished electronic eavesdropper, said he told the caller he was not interested in the proposal.

At a later date, Ek said, he got another call from one of the Watergate burglars, who offered to buy some of Ek's more sophisticated equipment. Ek says he again refused, and then got a third call asking if he would rent the equipment. Again, Ek says, he said no.

Finally, Ek told The Herald, he got still another call from a man whose identity the detective says he can't recall. This inquirer wanted to know "if I wanted to make some money doing electronic surveillance of some of the protest groups at the Democratic Convention," Ek says. Again, according to Ek, he turned down the job.

IN THEIR Miami interviews during the weekend, Scott Armstrong and Mike Hershman, staff investigators for the Senate committee, questioned at least four Miamians — Felipe DeDiego, Reinaldo Pico, Jose Arriola Sr. and his son, Jose Arriola Jr.

DeDiego has admitted he helped Barker burglarize the Los Angeles office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Both he and Pico admit they went with Barker and seven other Miamians to Washington for the funeral of former FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, where they tried to start fights that would disrupt speeches by Ellsberg and other anti-establishment figures.

The Arriolas operate a Miami printing firm, Avanti Press, one of whose phone numbers was called at least four times last May by Segretti.

But they insist they received none of the calls, and don't know who did.

MEANWHILE in Tampa, Raymond LaPorte, Segretti's attorney, filed a motion to dismiss Segretti's indictment for helping to distribute a phony campaign letter accusing Senators Hubert Humphrey and Henry Jackson of sexual misconduct.

LaPorte said the law Segretti is alleged to have broken is unconstitutional because it violates First Amendment rights to freedom of speech.

The statute makes it a misdemeanor to distribute a statement about a publicly declared candidate without properly identifying the author of the statement.

The government has charged that Segretti, with the help of Tampa accountant George Hearing and Tampa Young Republican Robert Benz, wrote the letter on stationery taken from the campaign headquarters of Maine Senator Edmund Muskie.

LaPorte's motion to dismiss the indictment will be heard today before U.S. Magistrate Paul Game. On Wednesday the Federal grand jury in Tampa will reopen its inquiry into other acts of political sabotage in Florida's presidential primary.

U.S. ATTORNEY John Briggs said Monday that Thomas McBride, an investigator for special Watergate prosecutor Archibold Cox, will be present at the grand jury meeting.

Briggs will confer with McBride in an effort to get a better concept of how Segretti's activities in Florida relate to the national Watergate scandal.

"He's looking at a forest," Briggs said. "And we're looking at some trees. Maybe we'll be able to help each other."