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Nixon, Kennedy And Watergate



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THE REAL TARGET of the Watergate break-in, it now appears from confidential White House documents, was Senator Edward Kennedy (Dem-Mass.).

Sources close to President Nixon confirm that he regarded Kennedy as his most dangerous political foe. The President also expected former Democratic national chairman Larry O'Brien to manipulate the party machinery in 1972 to bestow the presidential nomination upon Kennedy.

Up to the eve of the Democratic convention, say our sources, the President believed Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.), would step aside at the last minute to make way for Kennedy, with O'Brien pulling the strings behind the scenes.

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NIXON had scarcely settled into the White House in 1969 before he began searching for political ammunition to use against Kennedy and O'Brien. The orders were transmitted through staff chief H. R. Haldeman.

A host of colorful super-snoopers were recruited to investigate Kennedy and O'Brien. Among them were a Runyonesque ex-New York flatfoot, Anthony Ulasewicz; a fleshy-flush-faced ex-New York detective, Jack Caulfield; the bewigged former CIA agent and incurable romantic, E. Howard Hunt; and a young, pedantic security specialist who kept a red scrambler telephone in his White House desk drawer, Tom Charles Huston.

Less than six hours after Kennedy ran off the bridge at Chappaquiddick on July

18, 1969, Caulfield had a man at the scene searching for evidence that could be used to embarrass Kennedy.

Two years later, Hunt again tried to put together a Chappaquiddick scandal that would destroy Kennedy. But the two gumshoes came up with little that the press hadn't already uncovered.

The White House crowd apparently was obsessed with the idea that Kennedy had a weakness for wild parties and promiscuous women. But repeated investigations by Caulfield and Ulasewicz failed to produce any evidence.

The most embarrassing evidence that the gumshoes obtained against Kennedy was a picture of him in the company, quite innocently, of a female friend in Rome. White House aide Charles Colson promptly peddled the photo to a scandal tabloid, with a huge newsstand circulation.

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THE WHITE HOUSE documents show that O'Brien received similar attention from the snooper squad. Our White House sources say that Haldeman in April 1972 ordered an investigation into the relationship between McGovern and Kennedy. The White House still feared that O'Brien might be able to stalemate the Democratic convention, persuade McGovern to withdraw and push Kennedy as the presidential nominee.

It was to find out more about this suspected plot our sources believe that the Watergate burglars were ordered to break into O'Brien's offices and bug his telephone.