

Watergate Source Reports

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Hunt Urges 4 to Admit Guilt

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Four defendants in the Watergate bugging trial have been urged by former White House aide E. Howard Hunt Jr. to follow his lead and plead guilty, according to a source close to the defendants.

Hunt, according to the source, has led the four defendants to believe that — if they plead guilty — their families "will be taken care of" and they can expect relatively early release from prison.

The four, all from Miami — Bernard Barker, Frank Sturgis, Eugenio Martinez and Virgilio Gonzalez — are now seeking to plead guilty as a direct result of Hunt's urging and their loyalty to him, the source said.

The four and two other men, G. Gordon Liddy and James W. McCord Jr., are on trial before chief U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica, charged with conspiracy, wire tapping and burglary in the break-in and bugging at the Watergate Democratic Na-



E. HOWARD HUNT
... pleaded guilty

tional Committee headquarters June 17. The trial will enter its second week today.

Some of the Miami men have been associated with Hunt since he was a CIA agent assigned to the 1962 Bay of Pigs invasion. All of them served as subordinates to Hunt in the Watergate bugging, according to federal investigators.

Hunt's attorney, William O. Bittman, said Saturday that he knows of no suggestion made by his client that any of his alleged coconspirators should change their pleas to guilty and drop from the case—as Hunt himself did on Thursday.

"I would think that the suggestion is absurd... I can't conceive of it," said Bittman.

The report that the four defendants from Miami have been urged by Hunt to plead guilty follows news stories—by The New York Times, Newsday and syndicated columnist Jack Anderson—that the men are still being paid. While the Times and Newsday reports have described the source of the money as mystery men, Anderson reported in a column today that "most of the money for the defendants has been funneled through Hunt (who) delivered

See WATERGATE A16, Col. 1

WATERGATE, From A1

part of the cash to Bernard Barker."

Time Magazine also reported today that the same four defendants will receive cash settlements as high as \$1,000 each for every month each spends in jail as the result of a guilty plea. The magazine quotes Hunt as telling a Time reporter: "I'm almost certain the Cuban community in Miami will take care of those four."

Hunt reportedly began urging the four defendants to plead guilty more than a week ago, almost immediately after the prosecution had been informed that he wished to enter a guilty plea in the case.

There was no indication that the remaining two defendants in the case—Liddy, a former White House aide and Nixon campaign official, and McCord, the former security coordinator of President Nixon's re-election committee—intend to change their pleas to guilty and drop from the case.

On Friday, testimony in the Watergate trial was abruptly halted as Judge Sirica held a full day of secret conferences with the six defendants and their attorneys—amid indications that the four Miami men were seeking to change their pleas to guilty.

It was reported that the four were in a clash with their attorney, Henry B. Rothblatt of New York City, who was believed to be resisting any

change in their pleas. Rothblatt confirmed to reporters Friday night that he would refuse to enter a guilty plea.

Rothblatt was said to be aware before the trial that Hunt intended to plead guilty and had urged the four to do the same.

The attorney reportedly told his clients to "stay away from that son-of-a-bitch Hunt," but the former White House aide continued to advise the Miami men to seek guilty pleas through the first half of the week.

Finally, after Hunt had pleaded guilty to all the charges against him on Thursday and Rothblatt would not follow suit for his clients, the situation reached an impasse. As the trial was reconvened Friday morning, Barker—the leader of the Miami group—passed a note to the chief prosecutor in the case, Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert.

The note, apparently notifying the government that the four defendants wished to plead guilty but were being thwarted by their attorney, led to the day's secret conferences. It is believed that Rothblatt told the judge that his professional judgment would not permit him to enter guilty pleas.

In his opening statement to the jury last week, Rothblatt argued that his four clients' involvement in the Watergate case was that of "following orders" in "a military fashion" and not that of "evil intent."

Rothblatt apparently feels that with such a defense—arguing a lack of criminal intent—the jury will not convict his clients of all seven charges against them.

The New York attorney also reportedly made it clear he would not withdraw from the case voluntarily and enable his clients to seek new counsel who would enter guilty pleas on their behalf. A change of counsel in the midst of a case being tried can only be made with the approval of the presiding judge.

When court resumes at 11 a.m. today, Sirica can accept Rothblatt's judgment and continue the trial without any pleas being entered, he can relieve Rothblatt from the case or convince him to withdraw, or he can continue to negotiate the disagreement.

If the Miami men enter

guilty pleas that are accepted by the judge, its effect on the trial—with only two remaining defendants—is unclear. There have been indications that attorneys for at least one of the two men, Liddy or McCord, would move for a mistrial.

Such a move, it is understood, might be based on the surprising effect on the jury of returning to the courtroom and finding only two defendants remaining. After Hunt pleaded guilty and was dropped from the trial—out of the presence of the jury—the jurors were instructed without elaboration by the judge to disregard his case.

If the trial continues with only two defendants, it is possible that its scope might be diminished through the elimination of some witnesses relevant only to the cases against the Miami men.

One incident in the first week of the trial brought up the possibility that the scope of the trial may already have been scaled down.

Among the names originally on the prosecution's witness list, but now stricken from it, was that of Donald H. Segretti, a California attorney who allegedly was paid to spy on the Democrats and conduct sabotage against several Democratic presidential candidates.

Segretti's name was dropped from the witness list by the prosecutors about the same time that the prosecution learned that Hunt was going to plead guilty and probably be dropped from the trial.

Federal sources have said that Segretti was hired to conduct political sabotage and espionage against the Democrats by Dwight L. Chapin, the appointments secretary to President Nixon.

Segretti reported on his alleged operations to both Chapin and Hunt, according to the sources. Telephone records show numerous calls between Hunt's phone number and Segretti's, and at least eight between Chapin's phone number and Segretti's.

According to federal sources, Segretti was not involved in the Watergate bugging, and his only known relationship to any of the seven indicted men is with Hunt. With Hunt now out of the case, the prosecution has decided, without explaining why, not to call Segretti to the stand.

The elimination of Segretti as a witness means that there will be one less person who can conceivably testify to other parts of the alleged conspiracy to spy on the Demo-

crats and possibly to some of the questions Judge Sirica said he wants answered:

"What did these men go into that headquarters for? Was their sole purpose political

espionage? Were they paid? . . . Who hired them? Who started this?"