

# The Watergate Case Widens

**I**N HIS 15 years on the Federal bench, U.S. Judge John Sirica confessed last week, he had "never done this before."

But, then, Watergate was no ordinary case. Thus when one of the key defendants in the case suddenly offered some vital out of court information, Judge Sirica had little choice but to lay aside his long-standing stricture against direct dealings with a defendant.

After nine months of public exposure, the case had grown progressively more sensitive for the Administration, as new disclosures — some of them coming from acting F.B.I. director L. Patrick Gray 3d during Senate confirmation hearings — had implicated successively higher-ranking Presidential advisors in a broad espionage effort against the Democrats.

## Big Break

Then, last week, came the key break in the entire Watergate affair. One of the seven defendants finally broke the nine-month long-silence.

James W. McCord Jr., an ex-FBI and CIA agent, who

In a two-page, single space letter delivered to Judge Sirica through a probation officer, McCord broke the silence, telling the judge that he was torn by his family's fears of retaliation on the one hand, and a desire to minimize his own punishment on the other.

Charging that others yet unnamed were also involved

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in the conspiracy to bug Democratic headquarters, McCord stressed that he wished to talk with the judge privately "since I cannot feel confident in talking with an FBI agent, in testifying before the grand jury whose U.S. attorneys work for the Department of Justice, or in talking with other government representatives. . ."

## The Statement

Sirica offered to speak to McCord before passing sentence on him, with the condition that a full transcript be

to the judge's terms. At the same time, Sirica imposed the first sentence on the one of the seven defendants, all of whom had been convicted on charges of conspiracy, burglary, illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping. (Only McCord and G. Gordon Liddy had stood trial — with

the other five pleading guilty to all charges against them).

Liddy was sentenced to serve at least six years, eight months, up to a maximum of 20 years, in prison and fined \$40,000. A tentative 35-year sentence was also imposed on E. Howard Hunt Jr., a former agent of the CIA who served as a consultant to the White House, while 40-year-maximum sentences were tentatively imposed on four Miami men who were caught in the break-in and who had previously been associated with vigorous clandestine activities against the Castro government in Cuba.

McCord's sentencing, meantime, was postponed in light of his letter, which

charged, among other things, that:

- "Perjury occurred during the trial in matters highly material to the very structure, orientation, and impact of the government's case, and to the motivation and intent of the defendants."

- "Others involved in the Watergate operation were not identified during the trial, when they could have been by those testifying."

- "Members of my family have expressed fear for my life if I disclose knowledge of the facts in this matter, either publicly or to any government representative."



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MC CORD

was security director for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President when he was arrested inside the Watergate complex in the early hours of June 17, 1972, declared that government witnesses had perjured themselves at his trial and that severe "political pressure" had been applied to induce defendants to plead guilty and keep silent.

made of McCord's statements and that Sirica could release the transcript to the grand jury and the Select Senate Committee investigating the Watergate bugging and allegations of political sabotage sponsored by aides to President Nixon.

After a private meeting with Sirica, McCord agreed

#### More Names

Last week, McCord began disclosing those facts to Senate investigator Samuel Dash, chief counsel of the special Senate Watergate investigating committee, who told a news conference that McCord had given him the names of others involved in the burglary and wiretapping and was to supply still more names later.

Dash declined to say if any of those named by McCord were "higher up" than the seven who pleaded guilty or were convicted at the trial last January before Judge Sirica.

But the Los Angeles Times reported that it learned that McCord told Dash that John Dean III, counsel to the President, and Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former presidential aide and campaign official, had prior knowledge of the burglary.

Magruder promptly denied knowing about the Watergate operation in advance, while in Key Biscayne, Fla., White House press Secretary Ronald Ziegler said of the Times story: "Mr. Dean had absolutely no prior knowledge or any awareness whatsoever of the Watergate incident. The story is flatly incorrect."

#### Sinister Things

But one GOP Senator, Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, was incensed. Weicker, one of the seven members of the Watergate investigation committee, said he had independently established that White House aides were involved in the bugging, as well as other sabotage and espionage activities against the Democrats.

Expressing a "thorough disgust" with the men around the President, Weicker suggested that information now being investigated would carry the affair beyond Watergate to something even more sinister.