

Simple Watergate 'Caper' Sends Ripples Over U.S.

By ANTHONY RIPLEY
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WASHINGTON, April 26 — Two days after the break-in at the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex, Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press secretary, called it "a third-rate burglary attempt."

"This is something," he said, "that should not fall into the political process."

Mr. Ziegler has now declared all such past statements "inoperative," and the Watergate case, seeming to grow bigger every day under the pressure of the courts, the press and Congress, has indeed touched the political process of the United States.

What started out as a simple burglary — many Republicans called it a "caper" and laughed about it — now appears to be shaking the ladder that leads to the Presidency and to power in this country.

The Watergate break-in was discovered last June 17. By August, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst was saying the case was simple burglary and wiretapping, not involving the conduct of Government officials.

The indictments returned Sept. 15 reflected that view. The seven men charged included adventurers, former Central Intelligence Agency men and a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent.

There were no White House officials, no major political associates of the President.

Original Charges

The charges against them dealt with burglary, possession of wiretapping equipment, conspiracy to wiretap and disclosure of wiretapped conversations.

Now the names associated with the broadening investigation are not unknown adventurers but high Government officials—men who stand among the President's closest advisers and friends.

The investigation has moved several levels above simple acts of burglary and wiretapping.

Now the grand jury is considering charges such as obstruction of justice, perjury, violation of campaign laws, and violation of laws against interfering with a political campaign.

Until a few weeks ago, public focus was on the issues of who did it, the extent of what was done and why it was done.

Now the focus is broadening to questions of who knew of the Watergate affair and other

campaign espionage activities both before and after the break-in and whether they attempted to cover it up.

Scope of Investigation

Though the presentations made to the grand jury are largely unknown and no charges have been brought in the second round of investigations, enough information is available to tell the kinds of crimes and questions the grand jury may be probing. Included are the following:

¶Obstruction of justice. Were John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General, and H. R. Haldeman, assistant to the President, both of whom denied prior knowledge of Watergate, involved in a cover-up after it happened?

¶Obstruction of criminal investigations. Did L. Patrick Gray 3d, acting director of the F.B.I. at the time, destroy documents tied to the case?

¶Perjury. When Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy campaign director for the Committee to Re-elect the President, appeared before the grand jury on the first Watergate investigation, did he tell the truth?

¶Subornation of perjury. Did any of those involved suggest to the figures appearing before the grand jury that they not tell the truth?

¶Voting Rights Act violations. Did Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Magruder, G. Gordon Liddy, who was one of those convicted in the trial, and John W. Dean 3d, legal counsel to the President, interfere with the campaigning for an elective office?

¶Federal Election Campaign Act. Did the \$100 bills that were used so extensively in dealings with the Watergate burglars come from campaign contributions, and were records filed on those expenditures and contributions?

¶Conspiracy. What was the connection of the other Presidential aides and campaign leaders—Hugh W. Sloan Jr., Maurice H. Stans, John D. Ehrlichman, Herbert W. Kalmbach and Gordon C. Strachan? Did they and the others meet to

Still to come is the investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. It will look into the Watergate case and similar activities, into the general field of political espionage and into campaign contributions.

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