

Trying to Tarnish The JFK Name

By Thomas B. Ross

WASHINGTON — (CST) — The first White House documents known to have been in the Watergate case, it has now been revealed, were phony State Department cables forged to show "President John F. Kennedy's complicity in the assassination of (South Vietnamese) President Ngo Dinh Diem."

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The cables reportedly were the work of convicted Watergate conspirator Howard Hunt Jr.

Shortly after Hunt went to work as a White House consultant in the summer of 1971, President Nixon made the first official suggestion that Kennedy had something to do with Diem's death.

"I would remind all concerned," Nixon told a press conference on Sept. 16, 1971, "that the way we got into Vietnam was through overthrowing Diem and complicity in the murder of Diem."

It has been widely presumed that Hunt's alleged forgery was designed to tarnish the Kennedy name to undercut Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) as the potential Democratic presidential candidate in 1972.

It has been disclosed previously that Hunt was com-

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piling a dossier on Sen. Kennedy, particularly on the fatal auto accident at Chappaquiddick, Mass., in 1969, and these papers too were reportedly in the "burn bag" that L. Patrick Gray III, acting federal Bureau of Investigation director, consigned to the flames.

The "burn before reading" by Gray allegedly was at the suggestion of White House counsel John W. Dean III and John D. Ehrlichman, Nixon's chief domestic adviser, two weeks after the break-in at Democratic headquarters last June.

Ironically, President Lyndon B. Johnson also sought to leak damaging information about Diem's downfall and again to frustrate the presidential ambitions of a Kennedy — Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in 1968.

In his book, "The Politics of Lying," David Wise reports that Johnson declassified memos by Roger Hillsman, assistant Secretary of State for the Far East, bearing on Diem's ouster and death. But White House aide, John P. Roche, despite several attempts, failed to get the memos into print because the press saw no relevance in them at the time.