

Wanted It Expedited, They Claim

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Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to President Nixon, knew of the Watergate bugging plans before they were executed and urged that the illegal electronic surveillance be expedited, federal prosecutors have been told by two top officials of President Nixon's re-election campaign.

The two officials, former White House aides Jeb Stuart Magruder and Frederick C. LaRue, both have told prosecutors in the Watergate case that Colson made a telephone call to Magruder in the spring of 1972 expressing dissatisfaction that the bugging had not yet been carried out, according to highly reliable sources.

Colson, who resigned his White House post last month to enter private law practice, has repeatedly denied that he had advance knowledge of the bugging and recently said he had taken a lie detector test that supported that assertion.

Time magazine, in this week's editions, first reported that Colson had been implicated in the bugging through statements by Magruder, the deputy director of the Nixon re-election campaign. Additional details of Magruder's allegations, and those by LaRue, were subsequently obtained by The Washington Post.

Time also reported that Colson recruited young men during last year's presidential campaign to pose as homosexual supporters of Sen. George McGovern in an attempt to link the Democratic nominee with the Gay Liberation cause.

In the bugging case, according to highly reliable sources, Magruder has told federal prosecutors that Colson telephoned him in February, 1972, and asked: "When the hell are

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we going to get this bugging plan approved and into operation?"

Following Magruder's meet-

ing with the prosecutors, the sources reported, LaRue — a principal deputy to former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, the Nixon campaign manager—confirmed that Colson had made such a call to Magruder, but said that it came in March, not February.

Federal investigators told The Washington Post last summer that Colson and convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. directed an extensive "dirty tricks" operation of political sabotage against Democratic candidates during the 1972 presidential campaign.

James W. McCord Jr., another Watergate conspirator, has testified under oath that on the basis of his conversations with Hunt, he received the impression that Colson had advance knowledge of the plans to bug Democratic headquarters.

According to earlier reports of Magruder's allegations, the former White House aide told prosecutors that the bugging plans had been approved by former attorney general Mitchell, presidential counsel John W. Dean III and himself during a series of three meetings in February and March of 1972.

Mitchell has since acknowledge discussing the bugging plans at the three meetings, two of them held while he was still the nation's highest law enforcement officer, but maintains that he vetoed the idea of employing electronic surveillance all three times.

Following his appearance before the Watergate grand jury on April 20, Mitchell told reporters that the bugging plans had "always been cut off by me at all times, and I would like to know who it was that kept bringing them back and back and back."

An associate of Mitchell said yesterday that the former Attorney General was implicitly referring to Colson in that remark, as well as when he told the grand jury that he did not believe Magruder could have gone ahead with the bugging plans unless he went over Mitchell's head to unnamed officials at the White House.

Magruder, according to reliable sources, told the Watergate prosecutors that he interpreted Colson's phone call to him in early 1972 as a sign of impatience that the Watergate bugging plans had not yet been implemented.

The call, Magruder reportedly told the prosecutors, was made before the third meeting, held in Key Biscayne at

which the bugging was discussed.

LaRue, however, reportedly told the prosecutors that Colson's call came after the Key Biscayne meeting, at which both LaRue and Mitchell insist the bugging plans were vetoed for a final time.

The timing of such a phone call could be of legal importance in either supporting or refuting Mitchell's contention that he vetoed the bugging plans.

If such a call came after the Key Biscayne meeting, one person involved in the federal investigation said yesterday, it might lend support to Mitchell's assertion that the bugging was ordered by White House officials—namely Colson and perhaps others—after Mitchell had turned down the plans.

Last Monday, The Washington Post reported that Colson was one of several presidential aides who warned the President as early as December, 1972, that some White House officials were deeply involved in the Watergate bugging and a subsequent cover-up.

If Colson had known about and pushed for the bugging, as Magruder and LaRue have told prosecutors, it is unclear why he would have urged the President to find out more about the conspiracy.

Colson publicly denied last week that he had warned the President, adding that he would not reveal any communications between himself and the President. But an associate of Colson's reaffirmed that he had warned the President.

Early this year, a witness in the Watergate bugging trial told The Washington Post that Watergate conspirator Hunt had made statements to him that "Colson knew about the entire Watergate operation" and that "typed reports were going to Mitchell."

Hunt also told the four Miami men arrested in the Watergate that "the mission reported to Colson and Mitchell," a person close to the four told The Post in January.

According to federal investigators, Hunt reported directly to Colson on numerous undercover activities undertaken by the Watergate bugging team separate from the bugging—as well as on aspects of a nationwide campaign of political espionage and sabotage directed at Democratic presidential candidates.

Hunt and another Watergate conspirator, G. Gordon Liddy, according to Time magazine, broke into the office of Daneil Ellsberg's psychiatrist on Sept. 3, 1971, while they

were both on the White House payroll.

Time identified that psychiatrist as Lewis Felding.

At the time, Hunt and Liddy were working for the White House "plumbers," a group assigned to determine the source of news leaks. The group was headed by Egil (Bud) Krogh, then a White House aide and now undersecretary of the Department of Transportation.

Also working with the "plumbers" was White House aide David Young, who resigned abruptly three weeks ago. A White House spokesman said this week that Young's resignation was unrelated to the Watergate or other allegations of political spying.

Allegations of the break-in at the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist by Hunt and Liddy

were first revealed last week in Los Angeles, where Ellsberg is on trial for leaking the Pentagon Papers.

Colson's role in the Watergate bugging has been unclear for 10 months. The hard-nosed, 41-year-old attorney said in a memo to some members of the White House staff before last year's election that he would "walk over my grandmother if necessary" to re-elect the President.

Associates of Colson have however, repeatedly said that Colson knows the law and would not violate it. Immediately after the Watergate arrest last June 17, many officials in the White House and President's re-election committee asserted that the electronic surveillance had the appearance of a Colson operation.