

Several Federal Statutes May Have Been Broken

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WASHINGTON, May 17— Since President Nixon's announcement on April 17 that he had uncovered "major developments" in the Watergate scandal, allegations that officials and former officials of his Administration have been involved in the political espionage and sabotage case have mounted daily.

Many of the charges have been attributed only to "Federal investigators," "highly reliable sources" or "sources close to the case."

In some cases, the accusations have concerned complicity in the bugging of telephones in the Democrats' Watergate offices before the plot came to light last June 17, or in attempts to cover over the origins of the operation after that date. Still other accusations have dealt with illegal acts purportedly committed against Democratic Presidential candidates last year in the primary campaign.

Following, in summary form, is a partial list of the Federal statutes that may have been violated by principals in the Watergate scandal, with the penalties that may apply if the charges should eventually be upheld in court.

ILLEGAL INTERCEPTION

The illegal interception of wire or oral communications is a felony, punishable by a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both. Anyone involved in a conspiracy to violate the statute is liable to the same penalty whether he participates in an overt act or not.

An individual who has knowledge of either illegal wiretapping or such a conspiracy and fails to report it is guilty of the misdemeanor of a felony, which carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison, a \$500 fine, or both.

At the Watergate criminal trial in January, five men pleaded guilty to six counts of wiretapping, bugging and conspiracy in connection with the illegal electronic surveillance last spring of the Democrats' Watergate headquarters. Two other men were convicted by a jury of the same charge.

It has since been alleged that other individuals not indicted with these seven met on at least three occasions in early 1972 to discuss the proposed bugging and wiretapping operation.

OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE

Influencing, obstructing or impeding the "due administration of justice" carries a maximum penalty of a \$54,000 fine, five years in prison, or both. Conspiracy to obstruct justice is punishable by five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both. Perjury, or lying under oath, during a Federal judicial proceeding, carries a maximum penalty of two years in

prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both. Subornation of perjury—that is, causing or procuring someone else to lie under oath—carries an identical sentence. Conspiracy to suborn perjury is punishable by a maximum of five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

Lying to an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation constitutes obstruction of a criminal investigation, and is punishable by a maximum of five years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both.

According to Government investigators, a number of high White House and re-election committee officials met on more than one occasion after the June 17 Watergate break-in to prepare an elaborate cover story designed to conceal elements of the bugging plot.

These sources have said that the cover-up scheme called for all of those involved in, or with knowledge of, the bugging operation to deny such foreknowledge to Federal investigators, Government prosecutors, other White House officials, and to the President.

INFLUENCING WITNESSES

Whoever attempts to influence, intimidate or impede a witness in Federal criminal prosecution is subject upon conviction, to a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both.

Government investigators have alleged that one element in the concealment plot involved raising and paying money to the seven defendants in the Watergate criminal case as an inducement to have them plead guilty and remain silent.

CAMPAIGN INTERFERENCE

Under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, anyone convicted of interfering with campaigning for an elective office is subject to a maximum penalty of one year in prison, a \$1,000 fine, or both. Section 612 of Title 18 of the United States Code provides the same penalty for anyone who authorizes or distributes unsigned or falsely signed campaign literature.

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, which took effect April 7 last year, carries the same maximum sentence for each failure of a political campaign organization of a candidate for Federal office to report to the General Accounting Office receipts or expenditures of campaign funds after that date.

All three offenses are misdemeanors, and under the Federal conspiracy statute, a conspiracy to violate any one of them carries a maximum penalty not greater than that applicable for an actual violation.

According to Government investigations, a broad campaign of political "sabotage" was organized by the Republicans, aimed primarily at

undermining the Presidential campaign of Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine in last year's Democratic primaries.

FALSIFICATION OF FACTS

"Whoever in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact" is liable to punishment upon conviction with a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a \$10,000 fine or both.

Anyone who has knowledge of such an offense and fails to report it may be liable to a maximum penalty of years in prison, a \$500 fine, or both.

BLOCKING INFORMATION

Under Section 15, IC of Title 18, United States Code, it is a felony to willfully obstruct, delay or prevent the communication of information relating to a violation of any criminal statute of the United States by any person to a criminal investigator, including an agent of the F.B.I. The maximum punishment is five years in prison, a fine of \$5,000, or both.

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