

NYT
7-13-73

CLEMENCY OFFER TO FOUR REPORTED

Money Also Said to Have to Been Promised Burglars

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 12 —

An attorney for four of the original defendants in the Watergate bugging case has told Federal prosecutors that his clients accepted offers of money and executive clemency in return for their guilty pleas at the Watergate trial last January, well-informed sources said today.

The disclosure by the lawyer, Henry B. Rothblatt, to members of the Watergate special prosecutor's office was reportedly made at a secret meeting today after the four men, all of whom were arrested June 17, 1972, inside the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex, waived their attorney-client privilege on the matter.

At the time they entered their pleas of guilty to charges of second-degree burglary and wiretapping, the four men — Bernard L. Barker, a Miami real estate agent, and three of his associates, Frank A. Sturgis, Eugenio R. Martinez and Virgili Eugenio R. Martinez and Virgil R. Gonzalez — all insisted before the court that they had not been induced or pressured into changing their pleas of not guilty.

Reluctant Acceptance

Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the Federal District Court here, who reluctantly accepted the guilty pleas last January, said, "I'm sorry, but I don't believe you" when the four men denied that "higher-ups" had put pressure on them or offered them money.

Barker subsequently maintained the same position in public testimony before the Senate's Watergate committee in May when he said that "there were absolutely no conditions" attached to \$17,000 he received for lawyers' fees and other expenses from the wife of E. Howard Hunt Jr., who also pleaded guilty.

The two other defendants, James W. McCord Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy, stood trial and were convicted.

According to the sources, M. Rothblatt told members of the special prosecutor's staff that his four clients were offered a "package deal" by Hunt that included promises of executive clemency after serving "a little less than a year" in prison, payments of \$1,000 a month to support their families during their incarceration, and "rehabilitation" after their release.

"They bought it hook, line and sinker," one source said, adding that the offer was made by Hunt to the four men at a meeting in Washington a few days after the trial began.

Guilty Pleas Entered

On Jan. 15, Hunt pleaded guilty to the six charges against him, and the four others did the same a few days later.

Mr. Rothblatt confirmed in a telephone interview that he had met with the prosecutors today after receiving signed waivers from the four men, whom he no longer represents, releasing him from the lawyer-client privilege.

But he declined to say precisely what they had authorized him to say in their behalf.