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Transcript of Talks Bet

Following is a transcript of a tape recording made by then deputy CIA director Gen. Robert E. Cushman of a conversation held in his CIA office on June 22, 1971, with E. Howard Hunt, then a White House consultant. Hunt had come to Cushman to obtain CIA equipment for some of his work for the White House "plumbers" unit.

Cushman: Hey, good to see you. Come on in, have a seat.

Hunt: Could we make this just the two of us?

Cushman: All right, sure. We certainly can.

Hunt: Thank you very much. I've been charged with quite a highly sensitive mission by the White House to visit and elicit information from an individual whose ideology we aren't entirely sure of, and for that purpose they asked me to come over here and see if you could get me two things: flash alias documentation, which wouldn't have to (it's — to be backstopped —) and some degree of physical disguise, for a one-time op—in and out.

Cushman: I don't see why we can't.

Hunt: We'll keep it as closely held as possible. I don't know how you or your cover people want to work it, but what I would like would be to meet somebody in a safe house (Note: Plane comes over at this point, and words are very

indistinct.) physical disguise. We're planning on (traveling) either Saturday or Sunday. Tomorrow afternoon probably would be the earliest it could be accomplished, so if somebody could (do it by tomorrow afternoon, it would be a great job).

Well, you're looking very well.

Cushman: Well, it's a nice job.

Hunt: I know. I saw you at the Wisner Memorial presentation that day, you know, the plaque that's downstairs, and, if you pardon my saying so, you seem to have lost a little weight.

Cushman: Yes, I've taken some off. I sort of go up and down. When I go down, it's because I go on the wagon and don't eat very much at all, and this is hell to pay when you're being entertained and going to embassies and dinners, but it's the only way I can lose weight is to be miserable, relatively miserable.

Hunt: Yes. I have the same problem. And, curiously, since I've retired, the thing I've missed most is the gym facilities, because I used to get down there. I'd be there about 15 minutes before the director would arrive, so we'd kind of overlap a bit and that really kept my weight down, because it discouraged midafternoon snacking, you know, and then I didn't feel a need

to drink when I got home because I was too tired, you know, so I do miss that facility.

Cushman: Well, I don't use it. I ordinarily trot or jog for 30 minutes in the morning at home. If I wait until afternoon, I'm too tired. I'm just getting to that old-age point where, when I get home in the afternoon, I may work in the workshop or do a little bit of work in the yard, but I don't feel like running.

Hunt: I know what you mean.

Cushman: I'm amazed at the boss, because he's still doing it, you know. It may be 5:30 or 5 o'clock when he gets down there. I'm usually pooped. I don't want athletics at that point.

Hunt: Yes, that's right. I try to do a little setting-up exercise in the morning, but I'm not consistent about it. (Next part indistinct, but they're still talking about exercises.)

Cushman: Say, I can get in touch with you at the White House, can't I? (to tell you) what address to go to, and so forth.

Hunt: Right. So we can lay on—you think tomorrow afternoon is ample time?

Cushman: I'll give it a try, yes. I haven't talked to anybody yet. I suppose they can do it. I haven't been in this business before, haven't had to.

Hunt: Well, Ehrlichman

said that you the —

Cushman: Yes, he called me. I mean I haven't been in the cover business, so I don't know if they operate real fast, but I suppose they do.

Hunt: Well, I know they can.

Cushman: Yes, I suppose they (———)

Hunt: It's just a question of getting some physical disguise.

Cushman: What do you need? That will be the first thing they'll ask.

Hunt: Well, I'll need, let's see, what have I got here? I probably need just a driver's license and some pocket litter.

Cushman: Driver's license —

Hunt: Driver's license in any state at all, I don't care; some pocket litter of some sort, (———) pretty standard stuff.

Cushman: Pocket litter? TR ADD FOUR

Hunt: Yes, that's what they call it.

(NOTE: They both speak together at this point, and I can't make out what is said?)

Cushman: You don't care in what name?

Hunt: I would like the first name to be Edward, that's all, if it could be Edward, because I'm being introduced to this gentleman by just one name. (Note: few words indistinct) early this morning that somebody

ween Cushman and Hunt

by the name of Edward would be getting in touch with him.

Cushman: And any state for the driver's license.

Hunt: Yes, any state, it doesn't make any difference, and I'm just going to have to check into a hotel, and I'll use this alias documentation for that.

Cushman: Yes.

Hunt: And I'll be talking to the same people, in and out, and if it goes a little bit well, that's swell. (You can't be a beggar.) I just won't exist. It's not possible this Friday.

Cushman: OK. Let's see, you gave me a No. 1 time where I could get you.

Hunt: Right. Chuck Colson—my office is unattended so far, but that's direct line to Colson's office, and my office is two floors up, (and I'm only there part of the time).

Cushman: All right, fine. Whoever is there can get a hold of you.

Hunt: Anybody can get a hold of me —

Cushman: And I can give them the—or should I ask for you to call me back?

Hunt: No, Joan Hall is—

Cushman: Is the gal who answers the phone?

Hunt: Yes. She'll answer the phone, Joan Hall, and—

Cushman: And I can give her the time and the address.

Hunt: Uh huh.

Cushman: OK.

Hunt: I just—you know, I know so many people out here, it's just well that I'm not seen (— — —). (If I'm going to put on a physical disguise, it's going to stick.) I wouldn't want to be seen walking out of here. I'm sure they've got (safe) facilities downtown.

Cushman: Yes. They sure as hell did on my last tour of duty here.

Hunt: I remember FE — my private office is just a stone's throw from the Roger Smith Hotel—and it was practically an FE Division. They had so many spooks (——) there.

Cushman: The place I used to meet people was at an office building— right near where the Press Club is —it was the Washington Building, next door to the Press Club. There used to be a nightclub on the second floor, and we used to meet people up there. I had a gal who thought it was just lots of fun to be in this business. She used to have me meeting people out on the damn park benches and all this stuff, and I'd give here-hell, if necessary. She just thought it was fun, playing a game. Well, they're keeping you busy with this new—

Hunt: Well, they sure are, I'll tell you. But, actually,

I'm delighted that they thought about me and thought to call on me and that I had the time. This gives me about a 12-hour day now.

Cushman: Keep you from thinking you're retired.

Hunt: I'm not going into retirement. I just (NOTE: Another plane comes over at this point) I'm convinced that the reason we're doing all this is for a good purpose.

Cushman: Yes.

Hunt: An essential purpose

Cushman: If you see John Ehrlichman, say hello for me.

Hunt: I will indeed. I expect to see him tomorrow.

Cushman: He's an old friend of mine from previous days. He's got a (——) full platter too.

Hunt: Oh, that he does.

Cushman: How's that Domestic Council working out? You don't hear about it much in this business.

Hunt: It's working out pretty well. Of course, two things that have really electrified the White— and I don't know why I'm telling you this because your contacts are undoubtedly much higher than mine over there but, the Pentagon Papers, of course.

Cushman: Well, John — I think John is in charge of

the security overhaul isn't he?

Hunt: That's right.

Cushman: Well, I guess that's right. It's sort of a domestic problem rather than a Kissinger problem.

Hunt: That it is indeed.

Cushman: I really don't know what goes on on that side. I only substitute for the boss, you know, at Kissinger meetings, at whatever group it is, they all have different names, but the same people sit there.

Hunt: I find the same type of compartmentalization over there that I do here.

(They chat in here, but I skipped over it for the time being.)

Cushman: Well, let me get to work on this, and I'll get the word back to you.

Hunt: Yes, and the less my name comes up, absolutely the better.

Cushman: Yes.

Hunt: If you want me to use a pseudonym with this guy—actually, I suppose the best () if he's in the room () I'll get there at a specified time and I'll just go in and.

Cushman: OK, fine, I'll get the word to you on how we'll work it.

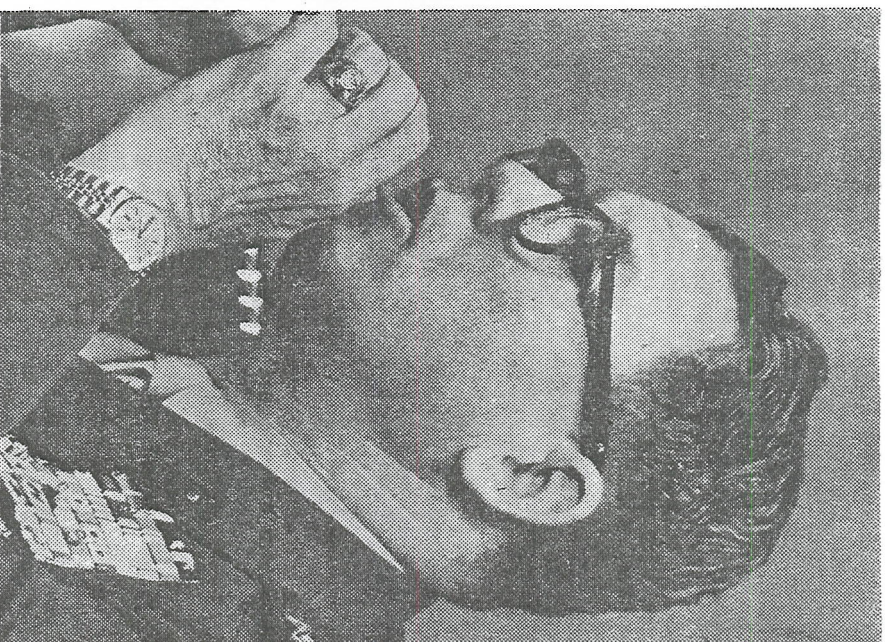
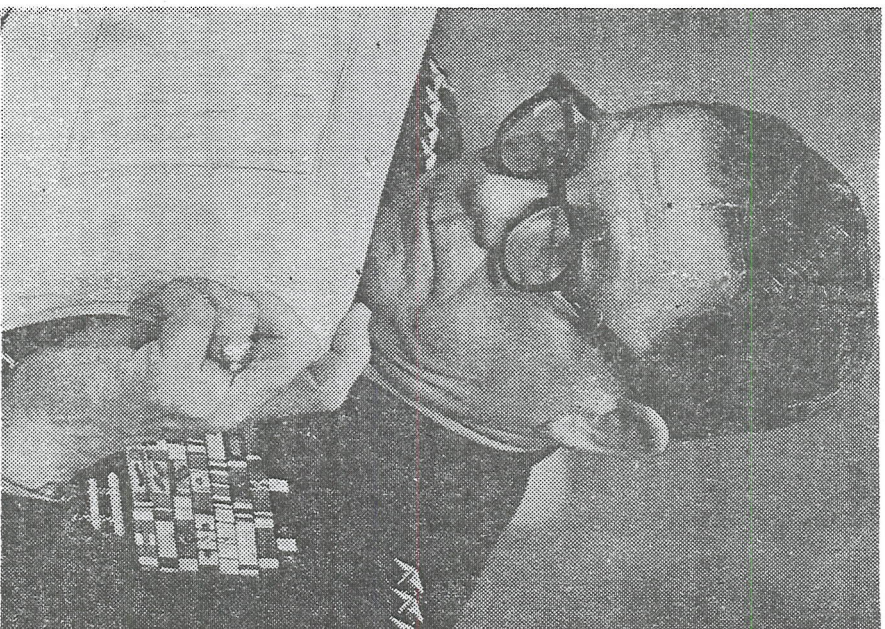
Hunt: I hope Karl didn't resent that I asked him to—

Cushman: Oh, no, no. I just had him in here in case there was—we needed staff (calling).



Wreathed in cigarette smoke, Helms awaits questions.

Associated Press



Gen. Robert Cushman, Marine commandant and former deputy CIA director, tells of helping project by E. Howard Hunt.

By Douglas Chevalier—The Washington Post