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*Watergate Called
'Pretext' by Tass*

MOSCOW, Aug. 2 (UPI)
—The Tass news agency said today the Watergate break-in was a "pretext for an inquiry by a special Senate committee."

The three-paragraph dispatch from Washington was only the fourth time the official Soviet news agency has referred to Watergate, and the first time it tried to explain it.

Tass said the Ervin committee was continuing its investigation of "the so-called Watergate affair" and had heard testimony from former Attorney General John Mitchell and presidential aides H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman.

Tass gave this background on Watergate:

"An incident at the height of the election campaign last year—when a group of persons were arrested in the capital's Watergate Hotel during an attempt to bug the Democratic Party headquarters there—is known to have served as a pretext for an inquiry by a special Senate committee."