

# 'Plumbers' and a U.S. Spy

Washington

The White House has sought to block deeper probing into the activities of the "plumbers" unit by telling federal investigators they might put a foreign agent's life in danger, investigative sources said yesterday.

The sources said investigators have been warned they might come across a Central Intelligence Agency operation that involved eavesdropping on Soviet leaders, including communist party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev.

The White House had no immediate comment.

The operation, although reported publicly more than two years ago, apparently is still considered sensitive because the agent is not an American and is still living outside the U.S., the source said.

The sources said the plumbers, who burglarized the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, were assigned a secret mission to trace a 1971 news leak that threatened to compromise the spy operation.

There are indications that the mission possibly bearing the mysterious code-name Project Odessa, involved wiretapping and other more embarrassing tactics. Fired special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox has said he tried to get information on Project Odessa from the White House, but couldn't.

The head of the plumbers unit, Egil Krogh Jr., said in a sworn affidavit in May that he was told by the CIA in 1971 "that a news story had put in jeopardy the life of an intelligence agent."

Krogh didn't say what the story was or what was done about it, but his boss, former White House domestic affairs adviser John D. Ehrlichman, made a vague reference to a still-secret wiretapping incident in testimony before the Senate Watergate committee.

Chief counsel Samuel Dash asked him if he was aware "of any wiretapping that was authorized by the

President and also the attorney general with regard to any particular leaks involving national security."

Ehrlichman replied, "The answer to your question, Mr. Dash, is yes. It was in relation to an investigation in 1971. Beyond that I cannot go."

In an Aug. 11, 1971, memo from Krogh and David

Young to Ehrlichman, the men discussed the status of their Pentagon Papers project and recommended a "covert operation be undertaken to examine all the medical files still held by Ellsberg's psychoanalyst."

In the same memo, a paragraph was deleted from the copy supplied to the Watergate committee because it was said to involve national

security. White House lawyers Leonard Garment and J. Fred Buzhardt met secretly with committee Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr., (Dem-N.C.) and Vice Chairman Howard H. Baker Jr., (Rep-Tenn.) and the committee's top lawyers to brief them on the matter.

The panel dropped any further probe into the incident.

Five weeks after the Krogh-Young memo, on Sept. 6, 1971, columnist Jack Anderson reported the CIA had been able to eavesdrop on Kremlin leaders. Anderson said yesterday he published the story only because transcripts of the overheard conversations convinced him the Soviets were aware they were being overheard.

It was not clear whether that is the story to which Krogh referred.

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