

Blackmail Laid to Official Named as Pentagon 'Spy'

White House Reportedly Told Watergate Panel the Aide Got Out of Trouble by Threat to Make Secret Data Public

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 12—The White House told the Senate Watergate committee last summer that a young Government official accused of passing National Security Council documents to the Pentagon had, in effect, "blackmailed" his way out of trouble by threatening to make the secret material public, well-placed sources said today.

The sources cited an inquiry initiated in late 1971 by David R. Young Jr., a member of the White House "plumbers" group established to stop leaks of information. The inquiry began shortly after publication of the India-Pakistan papers by Jack Anderson, the columnist, indicated that what amounted to a "ring" of American military spying was going on inside the National Security Council, the sources said.

The spying operation, the sources said, involved the passing of highly classified material from the National Security Council to the Pentagon. It was centered in the office of Rear

Adm. Robert O. Welander, who was then the military liaison officer attached to the council, the sources said.

One of Admiral Welander's aides, Yeoman 1st Cl. Charles E. Radford, was determined to be part of the military information network, the sources said, as were others whom the sources would only describe as "Government officials."

The New York Times reported today that as many as six officials inside the White House and Pentagon may have been involved in the military spy network. The sources refused to say whether the official who made the blackmail demand was working for the White House or for Pentagon at the time.

It was one of those other involved officials, the sources said the Watergate committee was told, who "actually demanded a very high post in Government in return for silence" after being confronted

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by the White House investigators. "There was an element of blackmail," one source said. "He didn't get it," a source said of the Government official's demand for a top job. "But even after the threat, he was kept on in the Government."

Two informed sources expressed dismay at the White House's apparent bowing to the alleged blackmail threat. "Why didn't they just arrest him and get it over with?" one fully informed source asked.

It was this specific information, they said, that was re-

garded by President Nixon as too damaging to release publicly when the plumbers' activities became known. "The President always felt that this was dynamite," a source said.

Confirmed in Essence

A White House official, in confirming today the broad outlines of the threat and blackmail account, suggested that Mr. Nixon believed its public disclosure would put the "whole military command structure on the line." He did not amplify on the remark.

Mr. Nixon has repeatedly

cited a mysterious "national security" matter that, he argued, prevented full disclosure of all the activities of the White House plumbers group. That group, headed by Mr. Young, was also involved in the break-in at the office of the former psychiatrist of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, who said he was responsible for giving to the press the secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam war.

That break-in, in Los Angeles, took place more than three months before the December, 1971, publication of the India-Pakistan papers and the sub-

sequent inquiry into military spying inside the National Security Council, an arm of the Presidency. When the internal Nixon Administration documents on the India-Pakistan War were published by Mr. Anderson, this touched off an intensive investigation by Mr. Young that led to the spy ring, the sources said.

China Trip in Planning

The New York Times and other newspapers reported today that the spy network itself was the basis of the "national security" concern. It

was only after publication of that account that some sources chose to disclose the blackmail threat.

At the time of the threat by the unidentified Government official, the sources said, the White House was in the midst of secret, intensive planning for Mr. Nixon's subsequent trips in 1972 to China and the Soviet Union. Details of those visits were tightly controlled by Henry A. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, and were not provided to high officials of

the Pentagon and the State Department.

It was this communications gap, the sources said, that led to the military spy network.

Briefing for Senators

The sources said that the Senate Watergate committee was initially told of the alleged blackmail scheme at a secret briefing last summer for Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, chairman of the committee, and Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the ranking Republican member.

The briefing itself arose after John D. Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's former chief domestic adviser, told the Senate committee in public testimony last July that the White House plumbers' group, which he supervised, had been involved in some highly classified mat-

ters that had nothing to do with the Watergate scandal.

The private meeting was arranged, and the White House sent two of its key attorneys, Leonard Garment and J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., to brief Mr. Ervin and Mr. Baker.