

Strachan Memos

Tell Early Roles

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The story of the Watergate scandal begins with a set of political memorandums addressed to H.R. (Bob) Halde- man, the White House chief of staff.

From a pay raise for G. Gordon Liddy to a search of Navajo reser- vations for Republican converts, the doc- uments released by the House Judi- ciary Committee yesterday show, no snippet of information about the 1972 campaign was so trivial that it failed to command top-level attention.

The memos were prepared by one of Haldeman's key deputies, Gordon Strachan, then a White House aide. The first memo, dated Dec. 2, 1971, men- tions Liddy's enlistment almost as an aside. Operation "Sandwedge"—an ear- lier plan to provide security and covert intelligence through a private detec- tive firm that White House special in- vestigator John Caulfield had wanted to form—had fallen through.

As a result, Strachan reported succinctly:

"The Attorney General discussed with John Dean the need to develop a political intelligence capability. Sand- wedge has been scrapped. Instead, Gordon Liddy, who has been working with (Egil) Bud Krogh will become gen- eral counsel to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, effective Dec. 6, 1971. He will handle political intelligence as well as legal matters. Liddy will also work with Dean on the 'political enemies' projects."

The brief paragraph, tucked into the middle of a five-page report to Halde- man on "political matters," represents the Judiciary Committee's first piece of evidence concerning the Watergate scandal. The Strachan memo and three others that followed were disclosed in the impeachment inquiry's account of the events leading up to the June 17, 1972, break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters here.

The 271-page volume sets out the now familiar episodes and allegations from Attorney General John N. Mitch- ell's purported approval of the break- in during the spring of 1972 to the bug- ging of some 200 conversations to the discovery of the spywork at the Water- gate office building here.

The Strachan memos, however, have not been made public before. They trace not only Liddy's hiring, but also the origins of the \$350,000 cash fund that was eventually diverted to help pay for the defense of the Watergate

burglars at their original trial. But they are significant primarily for what they tell of the White House's consum- mate attention to every detail of the President's re-election campaign.

Strachan followed up the announce- ment of Liddy's hiring with an awk- wardly compressed reminder that "our political types working the precincts in the ghettos (sic) and Navaho (sic) Reser- vations for Republican converts would do well to focus their attention upon the Holy Name Society, the Women's Sodality, and the Polish-American Union."

Even Liddy's insistence on a pay raise—upon moving over from his niche with the White House "plumbers"—required Haldeman's ap- proval. The Nixon administration, af- ter all, had imposed a nationwide freeze on salaries in those days. The White House had a standing rule that no one assigned to the re-election com- mittee should get a higher salary than he had been getting on the White House staff.

Strachan reported the problem in his next "political matters" memo to Haldeman on Dec. 6, 1971. Liddy was supposed to start working at the CRP that day, but he had been expecting a raise while he was still working under Krogh as a member of the "plumbers" squad.

"Liddy is paid \$26,000 by the Domes- tic Council," Strachan reported, add- ing that Krogh had been pressing for a higher salary for him, but that "nothing had happened during the freeze." Strachan said both Dean and Krogh felt Liddy ought to get \$30,000 at the re-election committee "because of his age (41), experience and prior sacrifice."

Below the entry were the three op- tions Strachan drafted for Haldeman's signature:

"Grant exception, Liddy to receive 30,000 per annum at Committee.

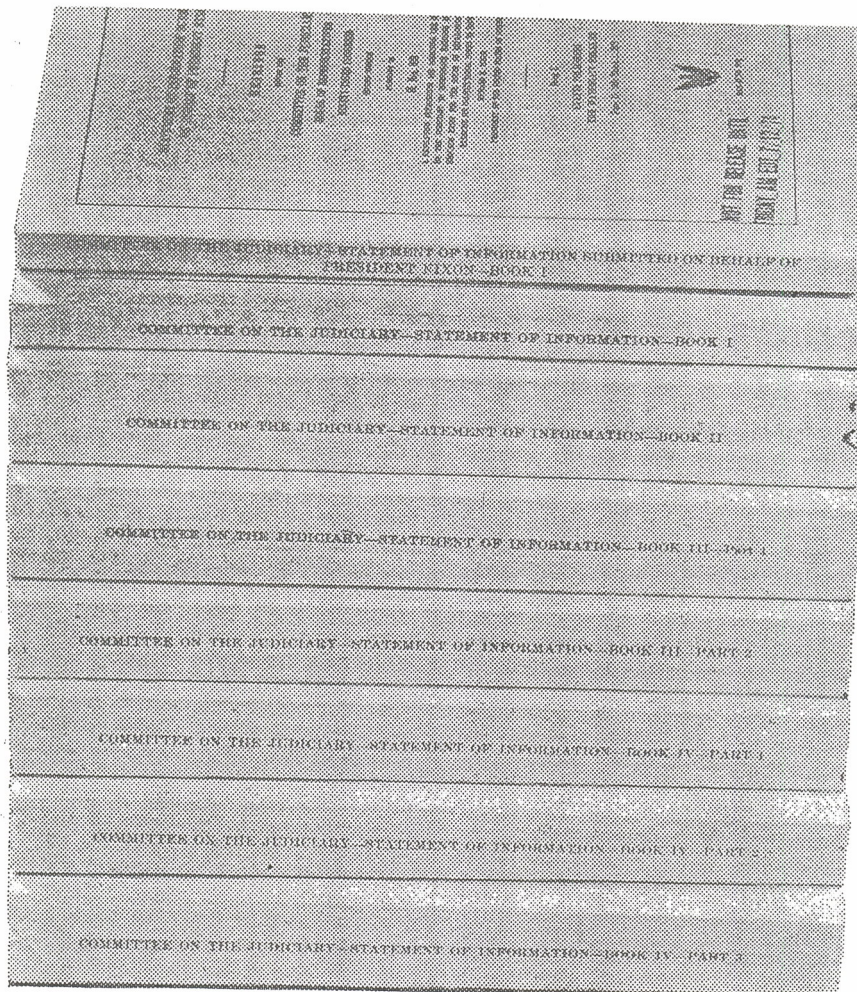
"Deny exception, Liddy accept job at 26,000 or find someone else.

"Other."

Haldeman initialed his approval of an exception for Liddy.

The memos also dwelt on what may have struck the White House at the time as larger issues, such as a re- ported promise by President Nixon, al- legedly made to the late Whitney Young of the Urban League in an overture for black votes, to set aside "9 million in make-work projects" through the Veterans Administration.

Strachan reported that "there is no



The eight volumes of evidence the Judiciary Committee published.

written record of this promise" and suggested it could be rejected "without undue political flak" so that "any available funds" could be channeled directly to White House "recruited blacks who can deliver for the President on Nov. 7, 1972.

Strachan's advisories also cite a ploy to get former Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.) to run on a third-party ticket in an effort to split the Democratic vote.

The \$350,000 cash fund popped up in a Feb. 6, 1972, exchange between Haldeman and Strachan. Haldeman, former Nixon campaign finance chairman Maurice Stans and others have testified that it was commandeered by the White House out of surplus funds from the 1968 campaign to pay for the costs of "special private polling" that it might need in addition to the regular polls ordered by the CRP.

The Strachan memos suggest that the secret fund was to be used for anything but polling. The cash account grew out of a report to Haldeman about more than \$900,000 that Mr. Nixon's personal attorney and chief be-

hind-the-scenes fund-raiser, Herbert W. Kalmbach, had on hand — some in cash, some in checking accounts.

Strachan recommended that \$690,000 be put into "legal committees" and that Kalmbach retain control of just the \$230,000 in "green" that he had. At the same time, Strachan pointed out that "Stans is opposed to paying for any polls other than through a correct committee; the risk of using green is just too high." As a result, Strachan recommended that polling would be paid for by regular Nixon Finance committees.

Haldeman approved the recommendation — with the scribbled caveat that the cash fund be made larger. "Make it 350 green & hold for us," wrote on the memo.

Ten days later, on Feb. 16, 1972, Strachan reported back: "Kalmbach cleared with the Attorney General and Stans the 350 in green under your unquestioned personal control. A separate box of green is being developed for the Campaign."

It was campaign "green" that paid for the Watergate break-in.