

WXPost JUL 19 1974

Evidence Details Wire

By William Greider

Washington Post Staff Writer

The House Judiciary Committee spread before the public yesterday a 2,000-page history of the Nixon administration's secret fears, a tangled chronology of the President's rage over foreign policy leaks and his administration's obsession with spying on domestic opponents.

The four-volume compilation of evidence—Book VII in the impeachment investigation's series of reports—deals with five major episodes of secret domestic surveillance spread over Mr. Nixon's first term.

The story begins with the 17 wiretaps of newsmen and national security aides in 1969 and ends with the undercover campaign spies dispatched to foul up Mr. Nixon's Democratic opponents in 1972. In between are the short-lived Huston plan of 1970 that authorized investigative burglaries, the White House "plumbers unit" created in 1971 to plug leaks, and the Ellsberg psychiatrist burglary which the "plumbers" committed.

In the last 18 months of Watergate controversy, these events have usually been treated as separate episodes, but the Judiciary Committee investigators have reconstructed the massive and

complicated details as one continuing story. It has an interlocking cast of characters. Much of it originates in the discontent which surrounded the Vietnam war, whether it was expressed by White House policy leaks or in radical street violence.

The unstated significance of the Judiciary Committee's presentation is that all of these bizarre instances of wiretapping, burglary and dirty tricks might be interpreted together as the road that led to Watergate—the pattern of behavior that conditioned Mr. Nixon's White House aides for the celebrated burglary of Democratic National Committee headquarters in 1972.

taps, Spying, 'Plumbers'

Furthermore, the committee staff has organized the evidence in a way which suggests another more damaging inference—that these pre-Watergate episodes became important motivation for the cover-up which followed the Watergate break-in itself, both for the President and his top aides. Telling the full story about Watergate, the evidence suggests, would have initiated a chain of disclosures about these prior incidents that would embarrass him and might send some of his subordinates to jail.

The genesis for nearly all of these matters was Mr. Nixon's continuing

frustration with the Vietnam war and particularly the repeated leaks of his secret foreign policy positions. "The god-damned Vietnam War," he said at one point.

His anger and determination to strike back at the culprits were starkly reflected in a new transcript of an Oval Office conversation published yesterday for the first time, a discussion on July 24, 1971, when Mr. Nixon was newly outraged over a New York Times story that reported his position for upcoming arms-limitation talks. It was only a few weeks after the President had been alarmed by publication

of the Pentagon Papers and their revelations about U.S. Vietnam policy.

With great emphasis, the President suggested that the White House should give lie detector tests to as many 1,500 people with "top secret" security clearance to find the source for the news story. Two aides, John D. Ehrlichman and Egil (Bud) Krogh, gently steered him away from that idea, at least from using it as an initial step.

See EVIDENCE, A12 Col. 1

A 12-page section of excerpts from evidence on domestic surveillance begins on Page A29.

EVIDENCE, From A1

"Listen," said the President, "I don't know anything about polygraphs and I don't know how accurate they are but I know they'll scare the hell out of people."

Ehrlichman and Krogh told him that they already had a prime suspect in the Pentagon and the investigation should begin with him before any wide-ranging "grilling." Furthermore, as many as 400,000 federal employees enjoyed the status of "top secret" clearance, they said.

The President said they should skip the secretaries and clerks and concentrate on the top executives in the various departments and agencies which had access to policy documents from the White House.

"That should include everybody in the NSC [National Security Council] staff, for example," the President figured. "You start with them. It should include about, uh, a hundred people.

But, uh, probably four or five hundred at State; for or five hundred at Defense, and, uh, two or three hundred over at, uh, CIA. And, uh, that's it."

Security classifications, Mr. Nixon said, had become meaningless and he urged Ehrlichman and Krogh to invent a new, more exclusive one which would be easier to police. "Don't use top secret for me ever again," Mr. Nixon said. "I never want to see top secret in this god-damn office."

In the Judiciary Committee's 2,029 pages of evidence released yesterday, the chronology begins less than four months after Mr. Nixon became President in 1969, when leaks of classified materials prompted the White House to order FBI wiretaps on 13 government officials and four news reporters. Some of those wiretaps continued for as long as two years and it is still in dispute whether they were handled with the proper legal authority.

During this period, the White House

officials sent out their own agent, Jack Caulfield, to attempt his own electronic surveillance of columnist Joseph Kraft. The wiretap didn't work out, but Caulfield turns up again later in the Watergate story as one of the White House's secret message-bearers in the cover-up talk with Watergate defendants.

The next important episode was in the summer of 1970 when an inter-agency committee of top intelligence officials recommended to President Nixon that he lift restrictions on illegal surveillance tactics, namely, burglary and mail searches, in order to spy on domestic radicals.

The President approved the plan, then was obliged to rescind it five days later when FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover objected strenuously. White House aides and later the President himself complained at length about the FBI's lack of vigor in pursuing security investigations.

The fiasco with the plan drafted by

Tom Charles Huston, in turn, provided at least part of the rationale a year later for creation of the "plumbers," a secret and separate White House investigative unit which would eventually do some of the things which Hoover wouldn't do.

If the FBI wasn't aggressive enough in its investigation of the Pentagon Papers case, the "plumbers" unit was. Two months after its creation, the unit sent a burglary squad out to Los Angeles to steal confidential medical records from the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Most of the principals in that episode have gone to jail now — but they provided crucial linkage to the Watergate break-in itself.

In the winter months after the Ellsberg burglary, G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr. and their squad transferred their employment from the White House to Mr. Nixon's campaign committee. They were the same people arrested at the Watergate complex, trying to plant a bug inside the Demo-

cratic National Committee offices. At this point in the story, the interlock of characters began to confront the White House with a string of potential scandals. Two days after the June 17, 1972 break-in, for instance, Liddy sent a warning to Mr. Nixon's campaign manager that the same burglars were responsible for the "plumbers" job less than a year before.

When FBI agents found the name of Donald Segretti in Hunt's papers, that threatened to uncover the whole business of campaign dirty tricks.

If the FBI found out that Segretti was paid by Herbert Kalmbach, the President's personal lawyer Kalmbach's bank records might then lead to Tony Ulasewicz, the ex-cop who did undercover political investigations. Ulasewicz, likewise, might tell them about the money he was secretly delivering to the seven Watergate defendants.

The chain of potential connections goes on and on through the evidence,

suggesting a desperate balancing act for those trying to cover it all up.

At selected points in the narrative, President Nixon himself participates in the effort to keep certain of those pre-Watergate episodes under wrap — especially the Ellsberg psychiatrist burglary.

On April 18 last year, the President ordered federal prosecutors to stay away from the incident because it was a national security matter. Yet, the next day, according to testimony from White House aide Richard Moore, Mr. Nixon worried aloud whether his top assistant, Ehrlichman, might face criminal prosecution if the Ellsberg burglary surfaced.

Mr. Nixon's concern was well-founded. When the "plumbers" burglary became known a few weeks later, it aborted the criminal trial of Ellsberg for leaking the papers and led to the trial of John Ehrlichman, convicted last week of perjury and a civil rights conspiracy.