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Raid:

The Plot Thickens in Watergate Whodunit

WASHINGTON—Only a day after five men were caught breaking into Democratic headquarters in the Watergate apartments here last June, one of them was identified as a security agent for both the Republican National Committee and the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

A day or so after that, it was found that two other men in the raiding party had in their possession address books and other papers bearing the name of a man who has served, at least until recently, as a part-time consultant to the White House.

John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General then serving as President Nixon's campaign manager, dismissed these developments as coincidental. Neither the White House nor the G.O.P. political apparatus bore any responsibility for the June 17 incident, he announced.

The security agent, James W. McCord Jr., appeared merely to boss uniformed guards. The consultant, E. Howard Hunt Jr., was said to have worked on stopping the drug traffic and on declassifying the Pentagon papers. Routine stuff, it was said.

More titillating, it seemed, was the fact that all six had past connections with the Central Intelligence Agency. They also had been involved in the Bay of Pigs invasion, and all but Mr. McCord and Mr. Hunt live in Miami, a city rife with fanciful but mostly impractical anti-Castro schemes.

The five men were carrying bugging equipment, copying cameras and large sums of money. When arrested, they gave the police fictitious names. And there were reports that the raid on the Democrats was only one in a series of policially inspired enterprises.

It was all quite mysterious—and highly diffuse. But, as in a typical who-

dunit, new evidence kept popping up as days passed. And most of it led to the Republicans, whose discomfort has been increasing steadily and noticeably the last two weeks. The bits of information being pieced together last week included the following:

The telephone records of the alleged leader of the break-in, Bernard L. Barker, showed repeated calls to the office and home numbers in Washington of G. Gordon Liddy, 42-year-old lawyer for Mr. Nixon's re-election committee.

It turned out that Mr. Liddy, who worked on fund-raising matters, had been dismissed on June 28 for refusing to answer questions concerning the raid put to him in the presence of his counsel by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Democrats immediately noted that Mr. Mitchell, who had dismissed Mr. Liddy, resigned on July 1. This, they suggested, was prompted not by his wife's well-known demand that he drop out of politics but because his men had been caught red-handed.

A \$25,000 cashier's check, payable to the Midwest finance chairman for the Republicans, passed in and out of a Miami bank account controlled by Mr. Barker in April. The chairman, Kenneth H. Dahlberg, explained last week that the check represented money collected in Boca Raton from campaign contributors.

Mr. Dahlberg also said he personally handed the check to Maurice H. Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce now serving as Mr. Nixon's chief money raiser. He said he had no idea how the check wound up in Mr. Barker's bank. Mr. Stans has refused any comment.

Four other checks, totaling \$89,000, passed through Mr. Barker's account at about the same time. They were drawn on the Banco Internacional of Mexico City, but the ultimate source of these funds remained obscure. Banking authorities regarded the handling of all five checks as irregular.

Despite these links to the Nixon campaign, the essential mystery remains. Those who planned the raid (it seemed likely that persons other than those arrested had been involved) were unidentified. And, above all, the purpose of the break-in seemed obscure.

But these details are never explained until the last chapter.

—WALTER RUGABER