

Gray Told Nixon His Aides Were 'Using' CIA, FBI

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Three weeks after the Watergate burglary, acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray personally warned President Nixon that "people on your staff are trying to mortally wound you by using the CIA and FBI."

The former FBI director's recollection of what he told the President was provided to a closed session yesterday of the Senate subcommittee on intelligence operations but the key language was made public afterwards by Sen. John L. McClellan, the chairman.

"There was a slight pause," Gray told the senators. "The President said, 'Pat, you just continue to conduct your aggressive and thorough investigation.'"

The subcommittee, which is exploring efforts by White House officials to implicate the CIA in Watergate, found at least one important conflict between the testimony of Gray and Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy CIA director, according to McClellan.

Walters has testified previously that, at the behest of President Nixon's top aides, he visited Gray on June 23 and told him that further investigations of how GOP campaign money was routed through Mexico might jeopardize CIA covert operations. Walters said he told Gray that H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, the President's chief of staff, had directed him to make the statement.

Gray, however, told McClellan's subcommittee that on that first visit of June 23 Walters did not mention that he was sent by the White House, according to McClellan. That left Gray "confused" over whether there was or was not a CIA connection.

On July 6, Gray met again with Walters and was informed that there was defi-

nitely no reason why the Watergate investigation would endanger any CIA operatives. They agreed they should alert the President, according to Gray.

The FBI chief then placed a call to Clark MacGregor, the President's campaign manager, at the Western White House. He recalls telling MacGregor:

"Dick Walters and I are uneasy and concerned because of the confusion and uncertainty in determining whether or not there is CIA interest in people the FBI wish to interview or there is not CIA interest in these people.

"We both feel that if people on the White House staff are careless and indifferent in their use of both the FBI and CIA we have the feeling that this can be injurious to both of our agencies and can be wounding to the President."

"I asked him if he would please inform the President," Gray added. "He said that he would handle it."

A half hour later, Gray said, he received a call back from the President who began the conversation by congratulating him about his action preventing a recent sky-jacking. Then Gray recounts this conversation:

"Mr. President, there is something I want to speak to you about. Dick Walters and I feel that people on your staff are trying to mortally wound you by using the CIA and FBI, and by confusing the question of

CIA interest in or not in people the FBI wishes to interview.

"I have just talked to Clark MacGregor and asked him to speak to you about this."

According to McClellan, Gray testified that after the President's reassurances there was no further interference from the White House on the CIA question. That version conforms with the President's own acknowledgment of Gray's early warning, issued Tuesday in Mr. Nixon's lengthy statement on Watergate.

Sen. McClellan characterized Gray as suffering through two weeks of "confusion and uncertainty" about how to conduct the Watergate investigation until he talked with the President.

"Mr. Gray kept speaking about being confused," McClellan said. "He said he couldn't tell whether he was supposed to pursue the investigation in those areas where the CIA had an interest or whether the CIA even had an interest."

Meanwhile, another congressional committee was told by CIA officials that convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord wrote six letters last year warning the agency someone was trying to involve it in the Watergate affair.

Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), chairman of a House Armed Forces subcommittee, told reporters he was trying to find out why the existence of the letters was not made known to the agency's director, James R. Schlesinger, until three days ago. The letters were written between July and January.

Nedzi said some of his questions "were responded to with the familiar phrase 'I forgot.' Other answers related to the letters being turned over to someone else and forgotten about. Everyone denies that there was a cover-up."

The witnesses before Nedzi's subcommittee were William Broe, the inspector-general of CIA; Howard Osborn, chief of security, and one of his assistants, Paul Gaynor.

They told the subcommittee, Nedzi said, that the letters were signed only "Jim," but that there was no doubt in their minds they came from McCord. McCord was convicted in the Watergate conspiracy in January.

Another member of the committee, Rep. William G. Bray (R-Ind.), said the letters did not say who McCord believed was trying to link the CIA to the Watergate break-in.

Nedzi said the letters surfaced only two days ago in the course of an "intensive review" of the case under Schlesinger's supervision. "Suddenly a memory was jolted," Nedzi said, and the letters were turned over by someone to Broe.

One of the letters had been addressed to former Director Richard Helms, Nedzi said, and the other five to other agency officials. Helms ultimately read all the letters while he still was in the agency, Nedzi said.