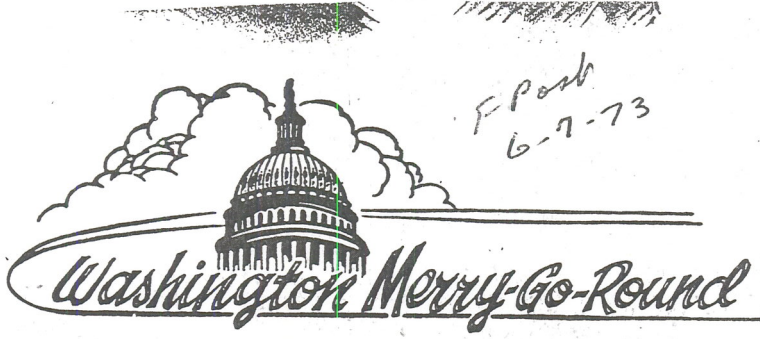


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Washington Merry-Go-Round by JACK ANDERSON



WASHINGTON — Topping all the other tactics used against the Democrats in the 1972 campaign, call girls were recruited to romance Democratic leaders and, between kisses, to wheedle political secrets from them at their Miami convention.

Senate investigators learned about this unique undercover operation from no less than ex-Attorney General John Mitchell. A summary of his confidential confession describes a meeting with Watergate ringleader G. Gordon Liddy at the Justice Department on January 27, 1972.

"Liddy arrived," states the summary, "with massive charts of an intelligence gathering program which was a huge structural operation with people in different places with different code names and included, among other things, the use of electronic eavesdropping devices, a call girl ring for the Democratic National Convention and other intelligence gathering operations."

Mitchell claimed he was "horrified by the magnitude and the budget" of the Liddy proposal. He, therefore, "directed Liddy to take his charts and burn them." White House counsel John Dean, who also sat in on the session, agreed with Mitchell that the scheme "far exceeded anything of rationality."

Liddy came back on February 4, according to the summary, "with another intelligence gathering plan but this time without charts. Dean was present and informed Liddy that it was an insult to the Attorney General to bring up matters like this."

But Liddy apparently was undeterred and his scheme strangely survived. By Mitchell's account, he was relaxing in Florida from the rigors of the ITT hearings when campaign director Jeb Magruder showed up with a paper outlining "an intelligence operation which he went through briefly and which included electronic surveillance."

"Mitchell told him" continues the summary, "he didn't want to

hear anything of this type, and there was no question in Mitchell's mind that Magruder left Key Biscayne fully understanding Mitchell's position on electronic surveillance. Mitchell cannot understand how Magruder could have conceived that he had authority to commence such an operation."

The operation, presumably, included the kiss - and - tell project. Investigators have confirmed that call girls were recruited but have been unable to determine whether they were actually used.

During the confidential interrogation by Senate investigators, Mitchell also denied published reports that he received summaries of the Watergate wiretaps under the code name "Gemstone." "The first time he ever heard of Gemstone," says the summary, "was in Jack Anderson's column." (Our story said the Gemstone reports were submitted to Magruder.)

After the Waterbuggers were arrested, Mitchell said "there were continual meetings both at the White House and CRP (campaign committee) concerning Watergate."

When he "woke up on time," he attended regular White House strategy sessions, which were held at 8:15 each morning. Apparently, these were meetings of the President's braintrust which, according to Mitchell, included top aides H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Henry Kissinger, Charles Colson, William Timmons and Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen.

"Watergate was discussed regularly at these meetings but initially was an unknown quantity," said Mitchell.

The presence of Kissinger and Petersen at these early Watergate sessions is interesting. Kissinger claimed he played no part in the Watergate affair; Petersen eventually was put in charge of the Justice Department's Watergate investigation.

Mitchell described Haldeman to the Senate investigators as "the man at the White House closest to the political scene."

Mitchell also noted that the deposed presidential counsel, John Dean, "was working for him and was literally stolen from him by the White House."

Notes the Senate summary: "Mitchell states that he was sorry to see Dean leave in that he was an extremely able, sophisticated and professional lawyer who operated in the true sense of confidentiality. He does, however, feel that based on what he has heard and seen of Dean recently that he has broken and he could not rely on him as he has in the past. He also has heard from Dean that he is having serious domestic problems."

It was Dean who introduced Liddy to Mitchell. The former attorney general, after consulting his diaries and logs, set the date as November 24, 1971. Liddy presented Mitchell with a memo outlining the work he was prepared to do for the campaign committee. "There was a brief paragraph," recalled Mitchell, "saying he could take care of intelligence gathering."

Liddy called on Mitchell again two weeks later to discuss the drug abuse program. Otherwise, Mitchell didn't see Liddy again until the January 27 and February 4 meetings to discuss the political espionage operation.

On June 15, Liddy paid his last call on Mitchell. But the ex-attorney general swore it had to do with a controversy over the Corrupt Practices Act. Two days later, Liddy's celebrated Waterbuggers were arrested at gunpoint in the middle of their own corrupt practices.