

SENATORS QUERY HALDEMAN'S ROLE

Panel on Watergate Wants McCord to Explain Any Link to Nixon Aide

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WASHINGTON, March 31—Senate investigators of the Watergate conspiracy said today that they wanted elaboration on James W. McCord Jr.'s testimony dealing with H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff.

McCord, who was convicted in January of wiretapping telephones at the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex last May and June, discussed Mr. Haldeman on Wednesday in a closed session of the Senate investigating committee.

But his statements evidently came near the end of the four-and-a-half-hour session and were not closely pursued at the time. The witness is scheduled to go before the panel again next week for further interrogation.

Interpretations Vary

It became apparent today that McCord, who worked at the time of the plot as security chief for President Nixon's re-election campaign organization, had been variously interpreted in his remarks about Mr. Haldeman.

Some sources, cited in reports earlier this week, quoted McCord as saying that the powerful assistant to the President had been "fully aware" of espionage operations against the Democrats.

But others present for McCord's testimony said that, in the context of the questioning, the convicted conspirator's discussion of Mr. Haldeman could not be said to have gone that far.

One informant said today that the subject of the White House official was raised at the last minute by Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., a Connecticut Republican who is a member of the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities.

The Senator was said to have

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asked McCord whether Mr. Haldeman had been aware of McCord's position as security coordinator at the Committee for the Re-election of the President and about the nature of his work.

The witness gave a "very affirmative" response, the source said, and recalled that he had once sent Mr. Haldeman a 24-page memorandum dealing with different security matters.

Another investigator present at the meeting quoted McCord as replying to Senator Weicker that Mr. Haldeman had been aware of his presence and had in fact been aware of "what was going on" at the re-election committee.

The source said today that he did not interpret this statement to mean that Mr. Haldeman had had advance knowledge of the break-in and wiretapping at the Watergate.

At the time of the break-in, the re-election committee employed two of the seven conspirators who were ultimately convicted or pleaded guilty.

Denial by White House

It is believed that Mr. Weicker's question was the only one dealing with Mr. Haldeman, but this could not be officially established. The White House has denied any involvement in the conspiracy by its chief of staff.

Mr. Weicker's interest in allegations that there was a wider Republican effort at espionage and sabotage than the Watergate case alone, and in suggestions that Mr. Haldeman was aware of the activity, has been apparent for some time.

He charged at a news conference this week that the broader operations against the Democrats last year had a "chief" who was still working at the White House. He refused to identify the person.

Met With Key Witness

The senator has said he is making inquiries independent of those being conducted by the senate committee, and it was understood he had met at length with Alfred C. Baldwin 3d, a key witness in the Watergate trial.

Mr. Baldwin, a Connecticut resident, worked directly under McCord in monitoring the wiretaps on Democratic telephones and in preparing logs indicating the contents of the overhead conversations.

Mr. Baldwin, a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was exhaustively questioned at the trial in January concerning the Watergate plot itself, and it was assumed that his talks with Mr. Weicker yesterday and today dealt with other matters.

The first three subpoenas served by the Senate committee were based on the testimony offered by McCord this week, sources close to the investigation said today. It was earlier suggested that the witness had provided "leads" for further study.

2 Secretaries Summoned

Sally Harmony and Sylvia Panarites, both former secretaries to G. Gordon Liddy, onetime counsel to the re-election committee, were among those summoned. Liddy was convicted with McCord in January.

The two women were expected to be asked about any circulation of wiretapping logs received at the committee from Mr. Baldwin and McCord and about the use of the information in any other form.

The third subpoena was served on Robert Reisner, a former assistant to Jeb Stuart Magruder, the onetime deputy director of the Nixon campaign. Mr. Reisner is now a White House aide.

He is understood to have had access to Mr. Magruder's appointments book and thus might be able to support McCord's testimony about a meeting in February in the office of John N. Mitchell, then the Attorney General.

McCord told the Senators that Liddy had led him to believe that the meeting had been held to discuss bugging operations and that Mr. Mitchell approved the Watergate plot at the time.

The former Attorney General and Mr. Magruder have both denied any knowledge of the affair.