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Mr Mitchell is named in Watergate case

From Ian McDonald
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Mr John Mitchell, the former Attorney General, was reported today to have been named by Mr James McCord, the convicted Watergate defendant, as having personally approved the bugging and espionage operation against the Democratic Party during last year's political campaign.

According to reports appearing in *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers, Mr McCord told the senators investigating the Watergate case that he had been told by Mr Gordon Liddy, a convicted fellow-conspirator and former White House counsel, that Mr Mitchell had approved the programme in February, 1972, while he was still serving in the Justice Department.

Mr McCord was said to have testified under oath that Mr John Dean, the White House counsel, and Mr Jeb Magruder, the deputy director of the President's reelection campaign, were also involved in the operation. In addition he was said to have testified that Mr Charles Colson, the White House special counsel at the time, knew of the bugging of Democratic headquarters.

Mr Mitchell, who resigned as Mr Nixon's campaign director two weeks after the Watergate arrests, called the reports "slanderous and false" and "based on hearsay". Mrs Martha Mitchell, his wife, telephoned United Press International to say: "They're not going to pin anything on him. I won't let them. And I don't give a damn who gets hurt. I can taste names".

The White House declined to

comment on the allegations against Mr Mitchell.

It was also learnt today that Mr Howard Hunt, the former White House and Central Intelligence Agency official who was convicted for his role in the Watergate operation, once recommended to his superiors in the CIA that Dr Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader, should be assassinated.

Mr Hunt, who was involved in the Bay of Pigs operation, disclosed his assassination recommendation during the taping of an interview with Mr William Buckley, the conservative columnist, last January. However, his statement was cut out of the programme when it was broadcast. It was only revealed when a tape of the interview, as it was originally recorded, was obtained here today.

In the original interview Mr Hunt said he had a list of four recommendations he had made in 1959 "well before I joined the (Bay of Pigs) project, based on my personal assessment of the situation in Cuba".

He continued: "The first recommendation I made was to assassinate Castro before or coincident with the invasion." The other three recommendations dealt with the destruction of the island's radio-telecommunications system and warned the United States Government not to expect a popular uprising to follow the invasion.

Mr Hunt's past advocacy of the assassination of a foreign head of state did not, however, stop him being hired by Mr Colson for the White House in 1971.

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Republican concern grows over bugging scandal

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Sources close to the Senate Watergate investigation noted that Mr McCord's allegations, startling though they were, were not in themselves sufficient to prove that others had been illegally involved in the conspiracy. The hope is that Mr Hunt and Mr Liddy, who have so far remained silent, will be persuaded to talk now that Mr McCord has begun to reveal all that he knows in the case.

Senator Howard Baker, of Tennessee, the senior Republican on the investigating committee, said that Mr McCord had provided "significant information . . . covering a lot of territory". Mr McCord is due to appear again before the committee next week.

The White House has consistently denied that Mr Dean had "prior knowledge" of the Watergate break-in.

Mr Magruder was not included in the White House denials, but he has personally denied having advance notice of the Watergate bugging.

A sign of the increasing concern among Republicans on Capitol Hill at the latest revelations in the Watergate affair was a statement by Senator Hugh Scott, the Republican leader, who has hitherto been a strong

supporter of the White House. There should, he said, "be the fullest possible disclosure" of the facts in the case.

Mr Scott said he was "naturally disturbed by any development that taints the political system" and he wanted the facts to be "ascertained and made public".

Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, a Republican member of the investigating committee, alleged at a news conference that the "chief" of the Republican espionage operation was still serving in the White House. He said he was a man of "Cabinet level" that is a presidential counsellor.

He did not identify the "chief" further, but the only person at that level who has been alleged in previous unconfirmed news reports to have been associated with the Watergate affair is Mr H. R. Halde- man, the President's chief of staff.

Senator Weicker said that there was a "tactic" to place the blame for Watergate on Mr Liddy as "the beginning and the end of this operation". He added: "We have got to get away from the Watergate" and investigate a whole range of sabotage and espionage operations during the presidential campaign.