

Hunt Was Given Access To 240 Vietnam Cables

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WASHINGTON, May 8—The State Department acknowledged today that E. Howard Hunt Jr., a Watergate conspirator, was given access to secret Vietnam diplomatic cables in 1971 at the request of David R. Young Jr., then a White House aide.

Charles W. Bray 3d, the department spokesman, said that Hunt was permitted to see all cable traffic between Washington and Saigon between April 1 and Nov. 30, 1963, and was allowed to take copies of 240 cables away with him.

According to Watergate grand jury testimony made public during the Pentagon papers trial in Los Angeles yesterday, Hunt said that another White House aide, Charles W. Colson had asked him to examine the cables as part of a plan to forge a State Department cable linking the late President Kennedy with the assassination of the South Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem, in November, 1963.

This was the first time that the State Department has been brought directly into the Watergate affair, and Mr. Bray seemed clearly unhappy as he had to answer dozen of questions at the regular noon news conference.

According to Mr. Bray, "on or about Sept. 20, 1971, there was a request from a member of the White House staff—Mr. Young—that Mr. Hunt be given access to cable traffic to and from Saigon between April 1 and Nov. 30, 1963."

Mr. Bray said that Mr. Young, who had been detached from Henry A. Kissinger's National Security Council staff to work for the Domestic Council under John D. Ehrlichman, telephoned William B. Macomber Jr. with the request that Hunt be allowed to see the classified cables.

Mr. Macomber, now the American Ambassador to Turkey, was then the Deputy Under Secretary for management.

Mr. Bray said that "I am not certain that a purpose was stated in connection with the request."

"But I do know from records that Mr. Hunt, who worked for at least part of one day and perhaps more, would not divulge his purpose in inspecting the cable traffic in the records service division," he said.

There were many questions from newsmen whether it was proper for the State Department to allow someone like Hunt—who was then working as a part-time consultant to the White House—to have access to such documents.

Mr. Bray said that when a White House staff member, "in good standing" asks the State Department for assistance, the department complies.

Asked whether Secretary of State William P. Rogers knew of the affair, Mr. Bray said that the first Mr. Rogers learned of Hunt's access to the documents was when he read news reports from Los Angeles yesterday.