

OPENING STATEMENT

E. Howard Hunt

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is E. Howard Hunt. I am here today to answer questions bearing on your current investigation. I have been informed that it is permissible for me to make a preliminary statement, and I want to take advantage of that opportunity. I will describe my personal background, my relationship to the Watergate entry, and the events which have befallen me since that day.

I was born in 1918 at Hamburg, New York. My father was a lawyer and judge; my mother was a pianist and a housewife. I was educated in the public schools of Florida and New York, and in 1940 graduated from Brown University. Six weeks later, I volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces. While a destroyer officer on the North Atlantic convoy run before Pearl Harbor, I was injured and medically discharged. Later I volunteered and became an Air Force intelligence officer. In 1944, I volunteered for the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of CIA, and was sent to China where I was engaged in partisan warfare until the end of the war.

In 1949, I joined the Central Intelligence Agency, from which I retired on May 1, 1970, having earned two commendations for outstanding contributions to operations ordered by the National Security Council.

During the 21 years I spent with CIA, I was engaged in intelligence, covert action, and counter-intelligence operations. I was trained in the techniques of physical and electronic surveillance, photography, document forgery, and surreptitious entries into guarded premises for

photography and installation of electronic devices. I participated in and had the responsibility for a number of such entries, and I had knowledge of many others.

To put it unmistakably, I was an intelligence officer - a spy - for the Government of the United States.

There have been occasions, as one might expect, when covert operations by the United States or other nations have been exposed. Such episodes have not been uncommon. When such mishaps have occurred it has been universally the practice for the operation to be disavowed and "covered-up". Usually, this has been done by official intervention with law enforcement authorities. In addition, the employing governments have paid legal defense fees. Salaries and family living expenses have been continued. Former CIA Director Helms has testified before this Committee in regard to some aspects of this practice.

After retiring from CIA, I was employed by a firm whose officials maintained a relationship with CIA. Some months after I joined the firm, I was approached by Charles W. Colson, Special Counsel to the President, to become a consultant to the Executive Office of the President. Mr. Colson told me the White House had need for the kind of intelligence background which he knew I possessed. This was the basic reason for my employment, which I understood at the time was approved by John D. Ehrlichman, and now understand was approved also by H. R. Haldeman, both Assistants to the President of the United States.

From the time I began working at the White House until June 17, 1972, the day of the second Watergate entry, I engaged in essentially the same kind of work as I had performed for CIA. I became a member of the Special Investigations Unit, later known as the Plumbers, which the President had created to undertake specific national security tasks for which the traditional investigative agencies were deemed by the President to be inadequate. In this connection, I was involved in tracing leaks of highly classified information.

These investigations led to an entry by the Plumbers into the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. The entry was authorized by Mr. Egil Krogh, Deputy to John Ehrlichman. It was considered necessary because of the belief that Dr. Ellsberg or his associates were providing classified information to the Soviet Union. The operation was carried out with my assistance, under the direction of G. Gordon Liddy, a lawyer, former FBI agent, and member of the Plumbers unit.

The Fielding entry occurred in September 1971. In late November, I was told by Mr. Liddy that Attorney General John N. Mitchell proposed the establishment of a large-scale intelligence and counter-intelligence program, with Mr. Liddy as its chief. Mr. Liddy and I designed a budget for categories of activities to be carried out in this program which came to be known as Gemstone. It was my understanding that the program had been approved by Messrs. Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former White House aide, and John W. Dean III, Counsel to the President. Later I learned that Charles W. Colson, Special Counsel to the President, had approved it, too.

In April, 1972, Mr. Liddy told me that we would be undertaking the Watergate operation as part of the Gemstone program. He said that he had information, the source of which I understood to be a Government agency, that the Cuban government was supplying funds to the Democratic Party campaign. To investigate this report, a surreptitious entry of Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate was made on May 27, 1972, and a second entry on June 17th. The second entry was accomplished by a group, two of whose members had been among those who accomplished the Fielding entry. I was indicted for my part in the Watergate entry.

Following my arrest and prior to my guilty plea, the Court ordered the Government to produce all material taken from my White House safe, and other evidence. Some material was produced, but significant material was withheld or destroyed. Because the Government had withheld evidence, I knew there was no chance of proving my defenses. In addition, my wife had been killed in an accident in December and I was deeply depressed and anxious to devote myself as quickly as possible to the welfare of my children. Accordingly, I had no alternative but to concede that I was ^{omitted but was} legally wrong and so I pleaded guilty, hoping for merciful treatment by the Court.

Instead, on March 23 of this year, I was provisionally sentenced to prison for more than 30 years. The Court stated that my cooperation with the Grand Jury and with this Committee would be considered in determining my final sentence.

Since being sentenced, I have been questioned under oath on more than 25 occasions, often for many hours,

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sometimes for an entire day I have answered thousands of questions by innumerable investigators, prosecutors, grand jurors, and staff members of this Committee. I am informed that such intensive and repeated interrogation is a most extraordinary procedure and of dubious legality. Even so, urged by the Court to cooperate fully, I have not contested the procedure. In fact, I have answered all questions, even those which involved confidential communications between my attorneys and myself.

After my plea, I learned of obstruction of justice by Government officials. I learned of willful destruction and withholding of evidence, and perjury and subornation of perjury before the Watergate Grand Jury. This official misconduct deprived me of evidence which would have supported my position that (a) my participation in the Watergate was an activity authorized within the power of the President of the United States, and (b) if my participation was not so authorized, I justifiably believed that it was.

Within the past few days, therefore, I have asked the Court to permit me to withdraw my plea of guilty and to dismiss the proceedings against me. I believe the charges should be dismissed because, based on revelations made public since my plea, evidence is now available to prove that my participation was not unlawful, and because, to

quote Judge Byrne when he dismissed charges in the Ellsberg case: "The totality of the circumstances of this case . . . offend a 'sense of justice'. The bizarre events have incurably infected the prosecution of this case."

It has been alleged that I demanded clemency and money for my family and for those who helped in the Watergate entry. I did not ask for clemency. Mr. Liddy assured me that, in accordance with the established practice in such cases, funds would be made available. I did seek such funds, but I made no threats.

Now I find myself confined under a sentence which may keep me in prison for the rest of my life. I have been incarcerated for six months. For a time I was in solitary confinement. I have been physically attacked and robbed in jail. I have been transferred from place to place, manacled and chained, hand and foot. I am isolated from my motherless children. The funds provided me and others who participated in the break-in have long since been exhausted. I am faced with an enormous financial burden in defending myself against criminal charges and numerous civil suits. Beyond all this, I am crushed by the failure of my Government to protect me and my family as in the past it has always done for its clandestine agents.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that at the time of the Watergate operation, I considered my participation as a duty to my country. I thought it was an unwise operation, but I viewed it as lawful. I hope the Court will sustain my view, but whatever that outcome, I deeply regret that I had any part in this affair. I think it was

an unfortunate use of executive power and I am sorry that I did not have the wisdom to withdraw. At the same time, I cannot escape feeling that the country I have served for my entire life and which directed me to carry out the Watergate entry is punishing me for doing the very things it trained and directed me to do.

Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members of the Committee, I thank you for your attention and your patience. I will now undertake to answer your questions to the best of my ability.