

Talks Bared By Strachan

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H. R. Haldeman and John N. Mitchell talked about the "adequacy" of an intelligence operation in the spring of 1972, immediately after Mitchell returned from Key Biscayne where plans for the Watergate bugging were discussed, according to a former aide to Haldeman.

In a closed-door appearance before members of the Senate Watergate committee last week, the aide, Gordon Strachan, gave the strongest testimony to date suggesting the possibility that Haldeman, who was then President Nixon's chief of staff, knew about discussions of the bugging plans.

Strachan said that Haldeman and Mitchell, who was then Mr. Nixon's campaign manager, discussed the intelligence operation on the telephone April 4, 1972, and set up a meeting on the subject.

Strachan testified that,
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based on memos he later destroyed, he concluded that the discussion between Mitchell and Haldeman had to be about the Watergate operation.

Mitchell has testified before the Senate committee that the only intelligence gathering operation he discussed was that involving the Watergate, but that he rejected the Watergate plans during the Key Biscayne meeting on March 30, 1972.

Deputy campaign director for President Nixon's campaign, Jeb Stuart Magruder, has testified that Mitchell approved the plans at the Key Biscayne meeting.

Frederick C. LaRue, a Mitchell aide who was the third person at the Key Biscayne meeting, testified publicly before the Senate Watergate committee Wednesday that Mitchell neither approved nor rejected the plans but instead suggested that a decision could be made later on.

Strachan's testimony about the telephone discussion between Mitchell and Haldeman five days later on April 4, tends to support either Magruder's or LaRue's version of the Key Biscayne meeting.

One Senate source familiar with Strachan's testimony said: "Here Mitchell and Haldeman are talking about the 'adequacy' of the intelligence plan five days after Mitchell claimed he rejected it."

Mitchell's logs of telephone calls and meetings show that on April 4—the day he returned from Key Biscayne—he talked on the telephone with Haldeman at 12:30 p.m. and met with him at 2:45 p.m. Strachan apparently did not testify as to

the substance of the meeting.

In addition, a summary of Strachan's testimony made available to The Washington Post said Strachan testified Magruder called him after the Key Biscayne meeting with Mitchell and told him that the President's re-election committee "now has a sophisticated intelligence-gathering capability" with an approved budget of about \$300,000. (The quotes are from the summary and are not necessarily Strachan's own words.)

To show the relationship between the Mitchell-Haldeman intelligence-gathering discussion and the Watergate operation, Strachan testified that Haldeman ordered him to destroy a memo about a meeting Mitchell and Haldeman scheduled about intelligence gathering after their phone call.

Haldeman ordered that

the memo be destroyed immediately after the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in, Strachan testified. In addition, Strachan testified that Haldeman ordered six other documents destroyed at that time—including two dealing with intelligence done by G. Gordon Liddy, who was later convicted in the Watergate conspiracy.

The summary of Strachan's testimony says that Strachan told the Senate committee that the documents he destroyed included a memo from Magruder on the Key Biscayne meeting with Mitchell.

The summary says Strachan testified that Haldeman read that memo, but perhaps not in its entirety, and it is unclear whether the memo made a specific reference to the Watergate bugging plan.

Other memos that were destroyed included documents that indicate that Haldeman had knowledge of other intelligence operations.

Specifically, the destroyed memos included "a handwritten note when Haldeman instructed Strachan to have Liddy move emphasis from Muskie to McGovern," according to the summary of Strachan's testimony.

During the Watergate trial last January, Thomas Gregory, a Brigham Young University student who worked for Liddy's coconspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr., testified that he first spied on the campaign of Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) last year and later shifted to the campaign of Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.).

Strachan also testified that he destroyed a memo

that instructed Donald H. Segretti, an alleged political saboteur, to discontinue reporting to Dwight L. Chapin, the President's appointments secretary, and commence reporting to Liddy.

Strachan also testified

that he and Chapin discussed setting up the Segretti operation in the summer of 1971. "Chapin said that in '68 (during the presidential campaign) he had to do the things himself," according to the summary.

Strachan also said that Haldeman was aware in 1971 that Liddy was going to do political intelligence work for the Nixon committee. The summary refers to a meeting on Dec. 17, 1971, that included a discussion of "whether Liddy was to be the one man responsible for political intelligence."

The summary also says that Strachan "was aware as early as 1970 that a dirty trick capability existed in the White House"—an apparent reference to what were called "attack ads" placed by then special presidential counsel Charles W. Colson who drafted advertisements criticizing congressional and senatorial candidates who opposed the President.

Strachan said that on June 23, 1971, Haldeman made six or seven requests, including the 24-hour-a-day surveillance of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), and, according to the summary, showed an "unbelievable interest in Kennedy."

Former presidential counsel John W. Dean III previously testified about such a surveillance proposal on a 24-hour-a-day basis that was rejected. Former White House secret agent John J. Caulfield and Watergate conspirator Hunt, however, did extensive research on Kennedy, according to earlier testimony and documents submitted to the Senate committee.

The summary also says that Strachan "knows of use of Internal Revenue Service for political purposes," but the summary gives no examples. Dean provided the committee with several examples of proposals to use the IRS for political purposes, including a memo from Colson asking for an IRS audit on a St. Louis Teamsters Union official who opposed the President.

Strachan specifically denied that he had any knowledge of the Watergate bugging

prior to June 17, 1972, when five men were arrested in the Democrats' headquarters at the Watergate office complex.

According to the summary, Strachan painted himself as an administrative aide who communicated all major political matters to Haldeman. But at one point the summary said, "Strachan was worried that he hadn't

brought to Haldeman's attention the likelihood of break-ins in the \$300,000 sophisticated intelligence gathering plan."

But the summary continued: "The fact that Haldeman wasn't upset (after the break-in) implies that he either knew about the break-in or didn't expect Strachan to know."

Strachan has been granted limited immunity for his testimony before the Senate committee. He is scheduled to testify today.