

Blackmail Try Reported In Pentagon 'Spy' Case

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Washington

A government official looking into the illegal passing of National Security Council documents to the Pentagon tried, in effect, to blackmail his way into a better job by threatening to make the secrets public, it was reported Saturday. 12 JAN

The White House informed the Watergate committee of this action last summer, several sources said.

These sources said that the threat had come in the midst of the White House investigation into what was believed to be a military spy ring. President Nixon rejected the unidentified official's demand but did not order him discharged, the sources said.

The official's identity could not be learned, but one informed source said he had demanded a key job in the military bureaucracy.

Another source said that the official may have been involved himself in the passing of unauthorized materials to the Pentagon, but this could not be confirmed. All agreed, however, that a serious "blackmail" attempt had been made.

The sources cited an inquiry initiated in late 1971 by David R. Young Jr., a member of the White House "Plumbers" group established to stop leaks of information.

The inquiry, which was begun shortly after publication of the Indian-Pakistan papers by columnist Jack Anderson, determined that what amounted to a "ring" of American military spying was going on inside the National Security Council, the sources said.

The spying operation, the

sources said, involved the passing of secret material from the National Security Council to the Pentagon. It was centered in the office of Rear Admiral Robert O. We-

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lander, who was then the military liaison officer attached to the council, they added.

The New York Times reported Saturday that as many as six officials inside the White House and Pentagon may have been involved in the military spy network. The sources refused to say whether the official who made the blackmail demand was working for the White House or for the Pentagon at the time.

It was one of those other involved officials, the sources said the Watergate committee was told, who "actually demanded a very high post in government in return for silence" after being confronted by the White House investigators. "There was an element of blackmail," one source said.

"He didn't get it" a source said of the government official's demand for a top job. "But even after the threat, he was kept on in the government."

Two informed sources expressed dismay at the White House's apparent bowing to the alleged blackmail threat. "Why didn't they just arrest him and get it over with?" One fully informed source asked.

It was this specific information, they said, that was regarded by President Nixon as too damaging to release publicly when the plumbers' activities became known. "The President always felt that this was dynamite," a source said.

A White House official, in confirming the broad outlines of the threat and blackmail account, suggested that

Mr. Nixon believed its public disclosure would put the "whole military command structure on the line." He did not amplify on the remark.

Mr. Nixon has repeatedly cited a mysterious "national security" matter that, he argued, prevented full disclosure of all the activities of the White House plumbers group. That group, headed by Young, also was involved in the break-in at the office of the former psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg said he was responsible for giving to the press the secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam war.