

Butterfield

Denies Tie
With CIA

NEW YORK, July 13 (AP)—Alexander Butterfield vehemently denied today allegations that he was a Central Intelligence Agency "contact officer" in the Nixon White House.

"The fact of the matter is I never was assigned, never was attached and never have been their designated contact man," Butterfield said on "60 Minutes" (CBS WTOP). "That is absolutely false."

It was the first comment from Butterfield, who in July, 1973, disclosed the existence of President Nixon's tape recording system, since he was identified as a CIA contact officer by retired Air Force Col. L. Fletcher Prouty on Friday. Prouty, a former Defense Department intelligence officer, said he had served in a similar capacity at the Pentagon.

The meaning of the words "contact officer" remained unclear. The CIA and the White House said neither Butterfield nor anyone else was spying on administration officials for the CIA. In a statement Friday, the CIA denied that Butterfield had even been employed by the agency.

In his CBS appearance, Butterfield also repeated his contention that Nixon had prior knowledge of the Watergate break-in.

"Nothing happened at that White House, and I do mean nothing, without the President's knowledge," he said. "And I think for something of that magnitude to have been scheduled . . . of course the President had to know about it."

Prouty had said that E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA agent and a convicted Watergate conspirator, had agreed to contact Butterfield to help arrange White House support for a group seeking the release of prisoners of war in Indochina. Among the prisoners were undercover CIA agents, Prouty said.

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But Butterfield, former head of the Federal Aviation Administration, said, "I have never met Howard Hunt in my life and I have never seen Howard Hunt in my lifetime . . . As a matter of fact, Mr. Hunt's presence on the White House staff was kept from me. It was purposely kept off the rolls and I had the official roll of all members of the White House staff in my capacity as head of administration in the White House."

Mike Wallace, who conducted the interview, told Butterfield he had talked with Prouty earlier today and that Prouty reiterated that Hunt twice told him that "you [Butterfield] were the guy in the White House."

"If I was their contact man, I was a hell of a poor one," Butterfield replied. "Because I had no contact whatsoever with the CIA."

Butterfield said he had CIA clearance when he worked at the White House.

"I read everything that went to the President's desk so I had to have a clearance for handling CIA material, which is not

a big deal," he said. "Thousands of people have the CIA clearance. I've had one in many of the Air Force jobs I've had."

Butterfield also reiterated that he believes he did the right thing in disclosing the existence of the White House tapes.

"I feel very good about my role," he said. "I never had any regrets about my role."

Butterfield said he felt that his firing from his FAA job in March by President Ford may have been "San Clemente directed" because he was the one to reveal the existence of the taping system.