

Bug Case Figures Used Covert Executive Phone

By Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward
Washington Post Staff Writers

Former White House consultant E. Howard Hunt Jr. had a special private telephone in the Executive Office Building that was used almost exclusively for conversations with Bernard L. Barker, a code-fendant in the Watergate bugging case, according to a former White House personal secretary.

The telephone apparently was the only one in the White House complex for which bills were sent to a private home—that of the secretary, Kathleen Chenow.

Miss Chenow told The Washington Post that by pre-arrangement she would submit the bills to an aide in the office of John Ehrlichman for payment. Ehrlichman is Presi-

dent Nixon's principal assistant for domestic policy.

Deputy presidential press secretary Gerald Warren said the White House would not comment on the matter because it might relate to the Watergate bugging investigation.

By not commenting, the White House left unanswered the questions of how Hunt's official duties could require a camouflaged telephone listing and why Ehrlichman's office would approve the arrangements for such phone service.

On June 20, it was reported that Hunt was associated with at least two of the men who were arrested in the break-in

See WATERGATE, A14, Col. 1

WATERGATE, From A1

and alleged bugging of Democrat National Committee headquarters at the Watergate three days earlier. At the time, a White House spokesman stressed that Hunt was only a part-time consultant whose work involved declassification of the Pentagon Papers and "narcotics intelligence."

In addition to being indicted in the Watergate bugging, Hunt, according to federal investigators, was an important figure in a campaign of spying and disruption against Democratic presidential candidates. Investigators have said the operation was conceived by high White House aides as basic re-election strategy.

Miss Chenow said the private phone, in use from August, 1971, to March, 1972, was intended only for Hunt's use.

Asked why it was listed in her name at her Alexandria address, she said: "That's a good question; they apparently wanted it in my name because they didn't want any ties with the White House—for what reason I don't know."

The C&P Telephone Co. official in charge of White House service confirmed that he had been asked by administration officials to have the phone installed and said that in his 25-year career in the Executive Mansion he could recall no such arrangement for anyone else. (SEE BELOW)

Miss Chenow, 25, worked during 1971 and early 1972 in a basement suite in the Executive Office Building shared by Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, another Watergate defendant, and David Young, a White House aide who, like Hunt and Liddy, were on the Ehrlichman staff.

During a 90-minute telephone interview, Miss Chenow also became the first person associated with the White House to confirm that a special team of officials there—the so-called "Plumbers"—was assigned to investigate government leaks to the news media.

Miss Chenow said that the team consisted of at least Young, Liddy, Hunt and Egil Krogh, another aide to Ehrlichman—and that they referred to themselves as "The Plumbers." She said that Young, for whom she worked as a personal secretary, made regular reports on the team's investigations to Ehrlichman. Young has declined to answer phone calls for a reporter.

Asked about the special telephone, Miss Chenow said:

"That was Mr. Hunt's phone. It was put in for me to answer and take messages for him." The phone rang "an average of once a week, sometimes two or three times a week," said Miss Chenow, and the caller usually identified himself as Bernard Barker.

"Mr. Barker always called that phone; he was about the only one who ever called," added Miss Chenow. She was among the witnesses who testified before the grand jury that indicted Barker, Hunt, Liddy and four other men on charges of conspiring to bug the Democratic headquarters at the Watergate.

Referring to outgoing calls by Hunt, Miss Chenow said, "I remember him calling Mr. Barker and his (Barker's) wife—nobody else." Hunt and Barker appeared to be good friends, she added, because they "were always chummy" on the phone, with Hunt often saying "How are you?, What you been up to?"

On occasion, said Miss Chenow, Liddy "might have used the phone to talk to somebody Hunt had placed a call to."

After the bills for the phone service were mailed to her home, Miss Chenow continued, she sent them "to John Campbell of the Domestic Council staff . . . so the White House would pay them. Apparently it had been arranged."

Asked who made the arrangements for installing the telephone and the billing procedure, she said: "Mr. Hunt, Mr. Young and Mr. Liddy. They had talked to Mr. Campbell and he would take care of it."

Campbell, 28, is a member of the Domestic Council staff headed by Ehrlichman. While House staff members say he functions as an office manager for Ehrlichman.

Jack Harrington, the C&P White House marketing representative, confirmed the existence of the telephone and said: "I can't understand why they did it . . . I've never heard of such an installation before."

According to Miss Chenow, neither she nor Young—who is a member of Dr. Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff—had any idea that Hunt or Liddy might have been involved in undercover political operations; but after the Watergate bugging Young "put two and two together," she said.

During the period that she worked with Hunt and Liddy, Miss Chenow said, there were occasional visits and calls on standard White House telephones to either or both of the men from other Nixon administration officials.

Among them, she said, were Robert C. Mardian, then assistant attorney general in charge of internal security

and later political coordinator of the Nixon campaign (Mardian reportedly directed the destruction of important records and documents after the Watergate break-in); Jeb Stuart Magruder, at the time acting manager of the President's re-election campaign and one of several persons who withdrew large sums of campaign money from a fund allegedly used to finance political spying and disruptions.

Also: Robert C. Odle, a former White House aide and Magruder's assistant at the Committee for the Re-election of the President (Odle allegedly participated in the destruction of records); and Charles W. Colson, special counsel to President Nixon and the man on whose recommendation Hunt was hired by the White House.

In addition, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell talked by phone with Young, said Miss Chenow, adding: "I don't know what about; I didn't know how often."

Miss Chenow said she had no idea of the purpose of the visits and calls by those persons and that at no time was there any suggestion that they involved anything sinister.

The former White House secretary, who now lives in Milwaukee, also said that:

- Many of the telephone conversations between Hunt, a former CIA operative, and Barker, a Cuban refugee with extensive CIA contacts, were conducted in Spanish—which Miss Chenow does not understand.

- "Colson's secretary often typed for Hunt and on one occasion Miss Chenow typed a memo from Hunt to Colson—the contents of which she cannot remember. ("I couldn't be sure if he worked with Colson but I knew they were good friends," Miss Chenow said. ". . . Mr. Hunt once said his family was going to the Colsons for dinner (and) he would say, 'I have a meeting with Mr. Colson at such-and-such a time'.")

- On at least two occasions, Mardian—who has denied association with the operation known as "The Plumbers"—visited Hunt, Liddy and Young in their basement office in the Executive Office Building. Mardian also attended a meeting with Hunt, Young and several others in Krogh's office during the period when government leaks to the news media were being investigated, Miss Chenow said.

- She was tracked down in England shortly after the Watergate bugging by a member of the staff of presidential counsel John Dean and asked to accompany him back to Washington to be interviewed by Dean and the FBI.

- Dean, who the White House has said conducted an investigation of the Watergate case for President Nixon, never questioned her. Instead, he listened without taking notes while two FBI agents interviewed her in the presence of Young and another White House aide.

- The day before she appeared before the grand jury, Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert questioned her extensively about Colson and asked her at one point "if I thought Colson was involved" in the bugging and how closely Mr. Hunt worked with Mr. Colson—if he did." She said she knew nothing about the bugging, in which Colson has denied involvement or knowledge.

- Liddy, following his departure from the White House in December, 1971, to become counsel to the Nixon re-election committee, would return to the White House about once a week "to visit."

Concerning the team of "Plumbers" assigned to investigate news media leaks, Miss Chenow said: "For a while they were studying State Department leaks. They checked embassy cables and tried to put two and two together about whose desks the cables went across."

The original project dealing with the Pentagon Papers entailed determining if accounts of their contents, as written by the New York Times, were consistent with what the actual documents stated, Miss Chenow said. Soon, however, "they were looking for leaks . . . to determine how the Pentagon Papers got out."

In addition to looking for leaks on the Pentagon Papers, she said, "The Plumbers" also attempted to determine how syndicated columnist Jack Anderson had obtained confidential White House memos on administration policy related to the Indo-Pakistani war.

Miss Chenow, who left the White House in March to travel extensively in Europe, described the origin of the term "Plumbers" this way:

"David Young's mother-in-law or grandmother or somebody saw in The New York Times that Krogh and Young were working on leaks. She called it to his attention, saying, 'Your grandfather would be proud of you, working on leaks at the White House. He was a plumber.' So David put up a sign on the door that said, 'Plumber: Mr. Young.'"