

Watergate Trial Moved To Closed Courtroom

WASHINGTON (AP) — The trial of six men accused of burglarizing Democratic Party headquarters was moved to a closed courtroom Friday amid speculation that there may be more guilty pleas.

U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica gave no reason for the surprise shift behind closed doors and warned the defendants and their lawyers there would be stiff penalties for anyone violating his orders for strict silence.

The closed session came after all of the day's previous trial business had been conducted out of hearing of the courtroom audience and the jury, at benchside before Sirica.

There had been speculation

around the U.S. Courthouse where the trial is in its fifth day that some or all of the six remaining defendants wanted to follow the lead of E. Howard Hunt Jr., who pleaded guilty to six counts Thursday.

A UTAH college student has testified that he met weekly with Hunt, a former White House consultant, to exchange intelligence reports on Democrats for envelopes full of money.

Thomas Gregory, a student at Brigham Young University, said he was paid for infiltrating the headquarters of Sen. Edmund S. Muskie and George McGovern, candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Gregory testified that he was recruited by a friend who was soliciting agents to spy on Democratic organizations. He said a man identifying himself as E. L. Warren paid for his plane ticket to Washington from Provo, Utah, and gave him his first assignment of infiltrating the Muskie camp.

He identified "Warren" as Hunt, who pleaded guilty Thursday to all six charges against him, charges of conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping — in connection with a break-in at national Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex last June 17. Trial continues for six others charged in the burglary.

HUNT TOLD U.S. Dist. Court Judge John Sirica that the government's description of a wide-ranging political-espionage operation ordered by officials of President Nixon's campaign committee was essentially correct.

Hunt was released on \$100,000 bond pending sentencing, which could be up to 50 years in prison. Later, outside the courtroom, he said: "Anything that I may have done, I did for the best of the country."

He added that to the best of his knowledge, no high-level Nixon administration officials were involved in the espionage.

Hunt's guilty plea and Gregory's testimony came as the Justice Department announced the filing of criminal charges against the Nixon campaign committee, alleging violations of federal election laws involving G. Gordon Liddy, another defendant in the burglary trial.