

Announcer.....And Watergate is in the news. Here's Bob Gleason with that story.

Gleason: Four more defendants in the Watergate espionage trial pleaded guilty in Washington today, leaving only two of the original seven defendants at trial. The guilty plea was entered by the attorney of Bernard Barker, Eugenio Martinez, Frank Sturgis and Vergilio Gonzales, all from the Miami area.

The plea brings to five the total number of defendants who have withdrawn from the trial since it opened a week ago. Last Wednesday former Nixon administration consultant E. Howard Hunt pleaded guilty to all charges.

Today's Washington Post quoted "sources close to the defendants" as saying that Mr. Hunt led the four men who pleaded guilty today to believe that if they pleaded guilty their families will be taken care of and they can expect early release from prison. The New York Times said that over the weekend the four men are still being paid by unnamed persons. The paper quotes one of the defendants as saying he suspects that part of the money comes from the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

The prosecution in the case said that all seven defendants were in the employ of Mr. Nixon's campaign committee when five of them were arrested inside the Democratic National Committee offices last summer. And before his plea was accepted last week, Mr. Hunt was required to acknowledge the essential accuracy of the government's description of a widespread espionage operation against Democrats ordered by top officials of the Nixon campaign.

The AP reports that sources close to the defense ~~thatsxfornrxf~~ ~~xxx~~ said earlier that the four Miami residents were under intense pressure to plead guilty and avoid a full airing of charges against them. The AP also said that the withdrawal of five of the seven defendants makes it unlikely that the full evidence in the case will be made public.

The two remaining defendants are G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House and Treasury aide and counsel for President Nixon's financial committee, and James McCord, security coordinator for the Nixon campaign. Both Mr. Liddy and Mr. McCord are said by sources to be "firm as a rock" for going on with the trial, and Mr. McCord's attorney said Mr. McCord intends to stand trial to prove his innocence.

And in a late release, U.S. District Court Judge John Sirica, who is hearing the case, refused today to declare a mistrial for the remaining two defendants. Attorneys for the two defendants had moved for a mistrial on the grounds that the jury would be influenced by the sudden absence of most of the other defendants.
