

Time Magazine Article

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Hunt Said to Name Mitchell

Former White House consultant E. Howard Hunt Jr. told four of his coconspirators in the Watergate bugging case that the electronic eavesdropping on Democratic headquarters had been approved by former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and presidential counsel Charles W. Colson, Time magazine reported today.

When Hunt recruited four Miami men to participate in the bugging—all of whom pleaded guilty to all the charges against them last week—Time says he told them: "It's got to be done. My friend Colson wants it, Mitchell wants it." The magazine does not cite the source of its information.

In a separate interview with Time, Hunt is quoted as saying of the Watergate bugging:

"I recommended against it, but it wasn't my decision."

Hunt, an ex-CIA agent who was hired as a White House consultant on the recommendation of Colson, pleaded guilty to all the charges against him four days before the Miami men entered their guilty pleas. Following his release from jail pending sentencing, Hunt told newsmen that he had no personal

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knowledge that any "higher-ups" in the Nixon administration had a role in the bugging of Democratic headquarters.

Last Monday, The Washington Post reported that Hunt had urged the four Miami men to follow his lead and plead guilty.

According to Time's account, the men "were talked into pleading guilty by Hunt," who "promised his four confederates that unidentified 'friends' would offer each defendant up to \$1,000 for every month he spent in prison, with more money to be paid at the time of his release."

Time's account says: "The guilty plea by the four defendants staved off a prospective courtroom uproar—testimony that Hunt had told them the Watergate bugging had been approved by the White House, specifically by two presiden-

tial advisers: former Attorney General John Mitchell, then head of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, and Charles W. Colson . . ."

Both Colson, who has said he will soon leave his post as special counsel to President Nixon, and Mitchell have previously denied any knowledge of the Watergate bugging. Mitchell, citing personal reasons, resigned as the President's campaign manager on July 1, two weeks after the break-in at Democratic headquarters.

The White House and the Committee for the Re-election of the President have repeatedly denied any official involvement in the bugging and have said the seven men indicted in the case acted on their own authority.

Two alleged coconspirators are still on trial in U.S. District Court on charges arising from the bugging. They are James W. McCord Jr., former security coordinator of the re-election committee, and G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House aide and finance counsel of the re-election committee.

According to Time's account, Hunt "became more cautious" after McCord and the four Miami men were arrested inside the Watergate on June 17 and began "referring to administration officials merely as 'my people.'" The magazine adds:

"He insisted that his people were prepared to put up plenty of money for the defense of the arrested men. Of the \$35,000 Hunt is known to have received from his people, however, only about \$8,000—or \$2,000 apiece—has reached the four defendants."

"If your people are caught in an operation you do everything you can for them. Money is the cheapest commodity you've got in an operation like this."

In an interview with Time, Hunt declined to discuss any of the specifics of the Watergate case. His general remarks on his career with the CIA and about the bugging of Democratic headquarters include the following:

" . . . in any operation I ever ran . . . nobody above or below me was ever sold out. I protect the people I deal with."

(Following a Hunt story about a wartime secret mission) "A team out on an

unorthodox mission expects resupply, it expects concern and attention. The team should never get the feeling they're abandoned. End of story."

"Nobody has invited me anywhere for six months. My family has been harassed, my kids are teased and taunted at school. Most of my old CIA friends, people I worked with for years and thought I was close to, have cut me off . . ."

• On his wife's death in a plane crash in December) "I've often wished that it had been me on the plane instead of my wife. The Watergate would have been over for me. My family would have been financially secure. And the four children would have a mother instead of a father wasting away in jail."

• (On why he became involved in the bugging operation). "There is a built-in

bias by the intellectual community, including the news media, against people who want to preserve the best of our country's heritage. As for me, I don't want to exchange the good of this country for the uncertainty of change. . . I was not aware that my activity constituted a federal offense. I never personally went into Democratic offices, and I thought the most they could get me on was second-degree burglary."

• (On the bugging itself). "I cased the situation thoroughly, and I'm good at it. I appraised the risk as very high and the potential return as very low. I recommended against it, but it wasn't my decision. I can tell you this: If it had been a CIA operation and I'd been in charge, it never would have happened."