

Data From Security Taps Reported Given Liddy, Hunt

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Information obtained from national security wiretaps was regularly routed to Watergate bugging conspirators E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy while they worked in the White House, according to informed sources.

The sources said that the two men received the information for several months in 1971 and 1972, at a time when the Nixon administration was wiretapping domestic radical groups without court approval. Officials of President Nixon's reelection committee testified at the Watergate trial last month that they later paid Liddy about \$235,000 to investi-

gate some of the same radical groups.

Information from national security wiretaps, generally placed by the FBI, is among the most closely held and sensitive data collected by the U.S. intelligence community.

Asked whether Hunt and Liddy got such information, White House Deputy Press Secretary Gerald Warren said yesterday that "after thorough checking, we can find absolutely no basis for the report." He said, however, that the report could not be flatly denied.

There are two types of national security wiretaps that Hunt and Liddy could have had access to—those against suspected "foreign" subversives and those against suspected "domestic" subversives.

The national security "domestic" taps have been one of the most controversial undertakings of the Nixon administration Justice Department. On June 19, 1972, in a major rebuff, the Supreme Court unanimously rejected the administration's contention that the executive branch could wiretap "domestic" subversives without approval of a court.

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A Justice Department spokesman said that, to his knowledge, Hunt and Liddy were "not cleared to see" either type of national security wiretap, and that if they did, it could be a security violation.

According to the sources, the highly classified reports were routed to Hunt and Liddy through David Young, a staff member of the National Security Council and an assistant to the President's foreign affairs adviser Dr. Henry A. Kissinger.

At the time, Young was supervising a White House group called the "plumbers" that was investigating leaks to the news media. Hunt and Liddy were members of the "plumbers," and shared an office with Young. Federal sources have said that Young was not involved in any of the questionable or illegal activities of either Hunt or Liddy.

Young could not be reached for comment.

Kathleen Chenow, a former secretary to Young, was asked about the routing of the wiretapped information to Hunt and Liddy. "I can't talk about that," she said.

Jack Hushen, the Justice Department spokesman, said he couldn't "rule out" the possibility that Hunt and Liddy received information from the wiretaps. "But I can't see any place where they'd have a need to know," Hushen said.

The Supreme Court June ruling dealt with unauthorized wiretaps of "domestic" radical groups, but the executive branch is still allowed to place taps on suspected "foreign" groups without court approval.

After the ruling, the Justice Department said it stopped 12 "domestic" taps.

The sources did not reveal which specific wiretap went to Hunt and Liddy, just that the information was regularly

routed to them for several months during their White House employment.

Hunt worked as a Consultant in the White House from about July, 1971 to at least March, 1972. Liddy was an aide to the White House Domestic Council from June, 1971 to December, 1971, when he joined the Nixon reelection committee.

The sources said that neither Hunt nor Liddy initiated any new wiretaps for the government, though there have been press reports that Liddy wanted to bug The New York Times to discover who leaked the Pentagon Papers. The Justice Department reportedly rejected this suggestion.

According to the sources, Egil Krogh, the former White House aide who headed the "plumbers," was not aware until well after the June 17, 1972 was not aware until well after the June 17, 1972 Watergate

break-in at Democratic headquarters that Hunt and Liddy had received information from national security wiretaps when they worked for him.

Krogh, now the under secretary of the Department of Transportation, became "very upset" when he found out, one source said. Federal sources have said that Krogh, like Young, was in no way involved in the other activities of Hunt and Liddy.

All national security wiretaps during 1971 and the beginning of 1972 had to be approved personally by John N. Mitchell, who was then the attorney general.

Liddy said last summer in a sworn deposition that it was Mitchell who recommended him for the job as general counsel to the Nixon reelection committee. Mitchell, who was the Nixon campaign manager for three months, denied in his own sworn deposition

that he recommended Liddy for the job.

Testimony in the Watergate trial last month revealed that soon after Liddy became general counsel to the Nixon committee in December, 1971, he was assigned the task of setting up a \$250,000 intelligence-

gathering network. He received \$235,000 of that money, according to the testimony.

Liddy and James W. McCord Jr., the former Nixon committee security coordinator, were found guilty last month of all charges against them in the Watergate bugging conspiracy. Hunt and four other men pleaded guilty to all charges against them in the case. All seven men are to be sentenced next month.

During the period Hunt and Liddy were employed in the White House, the FBI claimed it had about 50 active national security taps.

In June, 1971, Mitchell defended "domestic" wiretaps, saying: "To withhold such basic powers from the President on the ground they might be abused is to argue in a paraphrase of (Alexander) Hamilton's words, 'that there ought to be no President.'"

Mitchell continued, in a speech before the Virginia State Bar Association: "There is no dividing line between hostile foreign forces seeking to undermine our internal security and hostile domestic groups seeking the overthrow of our government. I don't see how we can separate the two, but if it were possible, I would say that history has shown greater danger from the domestic variety."

Testimony in the Watergate trial suggested that Mitchell—at least indirectly—approved the allocation of \$250,000 for an intelligence-gathering network for the Nixon reelection committee. One Republican source has said that Mitchell directly approved the funding.

Mitchell has declined repeated requests for interviews about the Watergate bugging or the intelligence-gathering operation. He has flatly denied knowledge of the bugging and has not publicly discussed the intelligence operation.

Before the Supreme Court ruling against "domestic" taps, Richard G. Kleindienst, then the nominee to succeed Mitchell as attorney general, said that the purpose of the domestic taps is "intelligence gathering . . . a lot of it is done without the thought of prosecuting" the subjects of the wiretaps.

One Justice Department said that the "domestic" taps were largely a way to keep law enforcement officials "plugged into" the activities of radical groups.