

SENATORS BRIEFED ON McCORD TALKS; NIXON BACKS DEAN

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Committee Won't Confirm
Reports High Officials Had
Watergate Knowledge

LIDDY BEFORE JURORS

But Refuses to Answer 20
Questions — 4 Other
Men Balk at Inquiry
NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 26—The Senate's special committee on the Watergate conspiracy met privately today to hear a synopsis of two long interviews its staff held last week with James W. McCord Jr.

The committee refused to confirm that McCord, convicted in January of spying on the Democrats last year, had said that two high Administration officials had prior knowledge of the plot.

But there were published reports that McCord had attributed such knowledge to John W. Dean 3d, counsel to the President, and Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of Mr. Nixon's political organization. The White House, on Mr. Dean's behalf, and Mr. Magruder denied the reports.

Nixon Talks to Dean

Other developments in the burgeoning Watergate affair included the following:

¶The White House said President Nixon discussed the reports of McCord's testimony with Mr. Dean this morning and that the President had "absolute and total confidence" in his counsel.

¶G. Gordon Liddy, a convicted co-conspirator in the January trial, appeared before a Federal grand jury this afternoon and refused on Fifth Amendment grounds to answer about 20 questions.

¶A spokesman for four men who pleaded guilty in the case said they would not meet "informally" with Senate com-

mittee investigators as McCord has done but would testify before the grand jury when summoned.

¶Senator Lowell P. Weicker, Republican of Connecticut, who is a member of the investigating committee, said he had "always been convinced" that others in the White House had known of the espionage campaign.

"There are other persons in the White House who are involved," Mr. Weicker said after

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attending the committee session in the office of its chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina.

"I have complete faith in the President of the United States that he personally has nothing to hide," the Senator said. "I restrict my comment to the President of the United States."

Senator Ervin emerged after the meeting to say that the panel had "received a small amount of confidential information which we are going to keep confidential." He refused to confirm any of the reports on McCord's statements.

The committee's chief counsel, Samuel Dash, had called a news conference yesterday afternoon to announce that McCord approached him through a lawyer Friday afternoon.

The call came, Mr. Dash said, within hours of the disclosure in the United States District Court here of a letter in which McCord said "others" had been involved in the Watergate conspiracy.

Papers Gave Names

Mr. Dash said he talked with McCord for the rest of Friday afternoon and for much of Saturday afternoon. He said McCord had named persons who had escaped prosecution in the case, but he declined to identify them.

The Los Angeles Times, quoting a source familiar with the interviews, published a report in this morning's issue quoting McCord as having named Mr. Dash and Mr. Magruder as among those with prior knowledge of the spying.

The Washington Star-News said this afternoon that McCord, "encountered on a Washington street today," said published reports of what he had told Mr. Dash were correct. The Star-News said McCord would not elaborate, but it said he apparently referred to the Los Angeles Times account.

According to the Los Angeles Times account, McCord told Mr. Dash that Mr. Magruder lied at the trial in January when he denied any advance knowledge of the effort to wiretap telephones at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex last year.

The Times also quoted McCord as having told the Senate investigator that Mr. Magruder should have identified Mr. Dean as another official who knew about the espionage operation before it was broken up.

Hunt Pressure Reported

McCord also told Mr. Dash, The Times said, that E. Howard Hunt Jr. had exerted pressure on four co-conspirators to plead guilty, telling them they would receive "executive clemency" and money for doing so.

Hunt, a one-time consultant to the White House, pleaded guilty at the outset of the trial and was joined by Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio R. Martinez, Frank A. Sturgis and Virgilio R. Gonzalez.

Ronald L. Ziegler, White House press secretary, denied "flatly" today "any prior knowledge on the part of Mr. Dean regarding the Watergate affair," and Mr. Magruder also denied the reported charge.

Mr. Dean was assigned by the President to conduct an investigation of the affair, and it was on the basis of his still undisclosed report that Mr. Dean gave assurances that no one "presently employed" in the Administration had been involved.

During the Senate hearings on the confirmation of L. Patrick Gray 3d to be permanent director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it was disclosed that Mr. Dean had received F.B.I. reports on the Watergate investigation.

Now Commerce Official

Mr. Magruder, after serving as deputy director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, became head of the Presidential Inaugural Committee. He is now an official of the Commerce Department.

As a Government witness in the Watergate trial, Mr. Magruder testified that the committee had budgeted \$250,000, most of which was paid to Liddy in cash, for a political intelligence operation.

Mr. Magruder said the primary purposes of Liddy's operation were to have been the guarding of prominent Republicans touring on Mr. Nixon's behalf and to provide security at the Republican National Convention.

Mr. Dean's personal attorney, Thomas F. Hogan, said today that Mr. Dean had asked him to warn newspapers that publication of the charges by McCord was potentially libelous.

It was also learned that the White House counsel was considering legal action against news organizations that report McCord's allegations concerning him.

In addition to its support for Mr. Dean, the White House also criticized Mr. Dash's announcement of the interviews as a "hastily convened news conference" that did not appear "to be an orderly and judicious method of procedure."

Urged to Cooperate

All seven men convicted in the Watergate trial are now under heavy pressure from Chief Judge John J. Sirica to cooperate with the Senate committee and with a Federal grand jury.

The jury, consisting of those who indicted the seven men last September, went into session today and summoned Liddy from the District of Columbia jail as its first witness.

Liddy, who was sentenced by Judge Sirica to serve between six years eight months and 2 3/4 years in prison for conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping, appeared pale and gaunt.

His ear had been cut during an early fist fight with a fellow prisoner over a hair brush. His testimony was delayed when his lawyer, Peter L. Maroulis of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., balked at Liddy's appearing in his blue denim uniform.

Rejects 20 Questions

Finally, Liddy, dressed in a dark blue business suit, was taken before Judge Sirica in an effort by Government lawyers to obtain a formal grant of immunity from further prosecution under which he could be forced to answer questions.

Liddy, during an hour's appearance before the grand jurors, declined to answer about 20 questions, including one dealing with whether anyone else had advance knowledge of the Watergate operation.

He also refused to say whether he had furnished information gleaned from the wiretaps to anyone else and whether he had discussed with anyone else whether the telephones had been tapped.

Mr. Maroulis, after the unanswered questions had been read in court, asked Judge Sirica to postpone the immunity hearing to let him study the queries. The judge gave him until Thursday to outline his position.

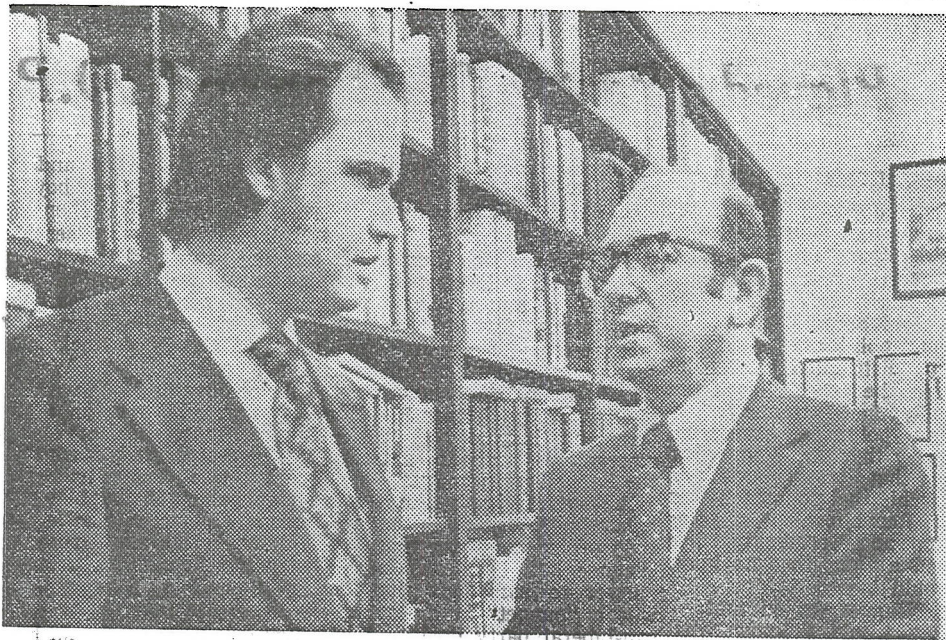
Meanwhile, a spokesman for Barker, Martinez, Sturgis and Gonzalez said they would appear before the grand jury but would seek immunity if the questioning went beyond the scope of the crimes for which they have been convicted.

The four men will also appear before the Ervin committee if subpoenaed, the spokesman said, but do not intend to meet informally with Mr. Dash or talk about details of the case in a private session with Judge Sirica.

May Meet This Week

McCord asked the judge for such a session, and the judge—who warned that a transcript of it might be made public later—is expected to hold such a meeting later this week.

Sources close to the families of the four Miami men agreed that they would go before the grand jury to answer questions



The New York Times/George James

Fred Thompson, left, minority counsel, and Samuel Dash, chief counsel of a special Senate committee investigating the Watergate conspiracy, in Washington yesterday.

and said McCord's move had increased the pressure on them to testify.

"If anybody expects great revelations from these guys they're goin gto be sorely disappointed," the spokesman for

them said, alluding to reports that they had been on the edges of the plot.

McCord's interviews with Mr. Dash were held in the offices of Bernard Fensterwald, a Washington lawyer who said today that he had been stand-

ing in for Gerald Alch of Boston.

Mr. Alch, who had been McCord's chief defense counsel during the trial, was at a Chicago trial today. He said he had been unaware that his client would talk with Mr. Dash Friday or Saturday.

Took Initiative

Mr. Fensterwald said that McCord took the initiative in meeting with Mr. Dash immediately after Friday's court session. He said the accounts of McCord's revelations were "very interesting," but he would not confirm them.