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Weicker Says Plot Leader Is Still on Nixon's Staff

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WASHINGTON, March 29— Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., a Connecticut Republican, said today that the unidentified mastermind of the Watergate plot was still on the White House staff, being protected— not threatened — by selective leaks of secret testimony to Senate investigators.

Turning conventional analysis upside down, Mr. Weicker told a crowded news conference that recent charges imputing prior knowledge of the Watergate bugging to President Nixon's palace guard may actually serve to defend the very men they seem to accuse.

Mr. Weicker confirmed that James W. McCord Jr., the convicted conspirator, had used hearsay in his closed session with six Senators yesterday to implicate in the planning of the Watergate plot former Attorney General John N. Mitchell; Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy manager of the Nixon re-election campaign; Charles W. Colson, former White House counsel, and John W. Dean 3d, the President's lawyer.

The charges against those men represent only "one-tenth"



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Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. at the news session on Watergate case yesterday.

of McCord's testimony, Mr. Weicker said.

But the more defect in the charges, in Mr. Weicker's view, is that they all hang, according to McCord's own testimony, on

reports from G. Gordon Liddy, another convicted conspirator, who was McCord's immediate boss in the operations against the Democratic headquarters.

Thus, Mr. Weicker argued, though the new charges seem to have spattered higher officialdom in the Nixon Administration, they are actually part of a concerted effort to isolate Liddy as the ultimate culprit in the Watergate affair.

"It has become obvious to me," said the Connecticut freshman, reading from a prepared text, "from personal conversations with Administration officials, and from conversations the press has had with Administration officials, and from the events of yesterday's hearings — that an attempt is being made to create the belief that G. Gordon Liddy is the beginning and the end of this operation."

Nixon 'Not Involved'

"Four days ago," he continued "I told my own staff of my concern that a 'tactic' would be used to lead the path of Watergate to Mr. Liddy doorstep. There should be no question that we will have to base our case and prove our case quite separately from Mr. Liddy. We would be negligent in our duties if we were to succumb to this 'Liddy tactic' and forget that the scope of the committee's mandate goes far beyond the Watergate."

Mr. Weicker is one of three Republican members of a select Senate committee looking broadly into the tactics of Presidential campaigning. In calling today for a wider investigation, beyond Watergate, Mr. Weicker said he meant to get at the whole scheme of espionage and disruption

planned against the Democrats last year.

The entire operation, of which Watergate was a part, came under the direction of "somebody still in the White House," he said.

Pressed by reporters to name his "somebody," Mr. Weicker refused. Asked if he referred to President Nixon, he said, "I still stand by the fact that the President was not involved."

A widening circle of Republican Senators has been muttering discontent in recent days with President Nixon's senior staff, but Mr. Weicker's attack today confirms his position as the leader of the Republican rebellion.

Mr. Weicker's new theory that news of the Watergate investigation is being managed to the advantage of the top conspirators confronts the more obvious conclusion that Democrats, who hold a 4-to-3 majority on the special Senate committee, have begun to track the Watergate planning to the President's highest advisers.

Other observers had attached some significance to the fact that since shortly before McCord started implicating higher officials last Friday he has had a new lawyer, Earnard Fensterwald, a Democrat and former Senate staff member.

According to the general theory that Democrats were using McCord's charges for partisan advantage, it was logical to speculate that Democratic Senators or their staffs were leaking the McCord testimony.

Mr. Weicker did not say who he thinks is leaking McCord's charges, but sources close to the Connecticut Republican say they believe McCord is leaking his testimony himself.