

Mitchell Got Bug Tapes, McCord Says

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James W. McCord Jr. has testified before a federal grand jury that his principal superior in the Watergate conspiracy told him that the transcripts of the wiretapped conversations of Democratic Party officials were hand-carried to former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, according to reliable sources.

The sources reported that McCord also testified that his superior in the conspiracy, former White House aide G. Gordon Liddy, told him that Mitchell had ordered a "list of priorities" in establishing electronic eavesdropping operations against the Democrats.

McCord, according to the sources, said the first priority was to bug the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate, then the campaign headquarters of Sen. George S. McGovern and, finally, rooms in the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami to be occupied by presidential candidates and party officials at the Democratic National Convention.

McCord, the former security coordinator of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, was reached by telephone yesterday and confirmed the sources' account of his grand jury testimony.

Mitchell, through a spokesman at the re-election committee, denied that he ever received transcripts or logs of wiretapped conversations, and denied once more that he had prior knowledge of any plans for illegal electronic eavesdropping.

In related developments yesterday:

• Three principal figures in an alleged campaign of political espionage and sabotage conducted against the Democrats appeared before the same grand jury as McCord yesterday. They are former presidential appointments secretary Dwight L. Chapin, former White House aide Gordon Strachan, and alleged political saboteur Donald H. Segretti.

• Reliable investigative sources said that Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, the chief Nixon fund-raiser, appeared earlier this month before a federal grand jury in New York City investigating a \$200,000 cash contribution to the Nixon committee by Robert L. Vesco. Vesco is the central figure in a Securities and Exchange Commission suit alleging that investors were swindled out of \$224 million.

• Philip S. Hughes, head of the Federal Elections Office

in the General Accounting Office, said that an investigation of the Nixon campaign's finances will be expanded to include an apparent violation of

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the law in the disbursement of at least \$70,000 in cash to Frederick C. LaRue, one of Mitchell's closest aides. Reliable investigative sources have said the money came from the same fund that financed the Water-

gate bugging and was not properly reported under terms in Washington, mentioned that matter to the grand jury.

Like his earlier testimony before the Senate's select investigating committee, McCord's grand jury statements about the alleged involvement in wiretapping activities of presidential aides and advisers was based on hearsay—primarily in the form of what he says he was told by Liddy.

Liddy has been sentenced to an additional prison term for contempt of court in refusing to answer the grand jury's questions, including those based on what he is said to have told McCord.

According to reliable accounts of McCord's appearance before the grand jury, he testified that Liddy showed him final typed transcripts of wiretapped conversations on several occasions and said: "These are for the (former) attorney general." On at least one occasion, McCord reportedly testified, Liddy specifically told him that he regularly "hand-carried" the transcripts to Mitchell, who was then President Nixon's campaign manager.

On another occasion, McCord reportedly testified, he saw Liddy's secretary, Sally Harmony, typing a final version of the transcripts from McCord's worn preliminary draft. One source familiar with

the testimony said yesterday: "If those conversations were being retyped, it meant they had to be going somewhere; Liddy certainly didn't need to have them typed again for himself."

Miss Harmony, who testified before the Watergate grand jury in its original inquiry last year, has been contacted by the Senate select committee investigating the bugging of Democratic headquarters and other political espionage and sabotage, and is expected to be recalled before the grand jury as well.

McCord also reportedly told the grand jury that the Watergate bugging team had planned to install wiretapping and eavesdropping devices at Sen. McGovern's headquarters during the same weekend that he and four other conspirators were arrested at the Watergate. The operation at the Fontainebleu, he reportedly testified, was still in the planning stages and Liddy told him that it would be executed as soon as word came from Mitchell.

McCord is also known to have told others that the bugging team had planned to wiretap the campaign headquarters of Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) during the spring, but that the plans were abandoned when it was clear that Muskie was no longer the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination. It could not be learned if McCord, who rented an office next door to Muskie headquarters, mentioned that matter to the grand jury.

The meaning of the appearance by former presidential appointments secretary Chapin, former White House aide Strachan and alleged agent provocateur Segretti before the Watergate grand jury yesterday was not immediately clear.

One federal source said their appearance is the first indication that the grand jury investigation may have moved beyond illegal electronic surveillance to include a broad range of political espionage and sab-

otage activities. Previously, the Justice Department has maintained that there was nothing illegal about the operations Segretti and Chapin were allegedly involved in.

Some federal sources suggested

yesterday that Chapin and Segretti were called

and Segretti were called before the grand jury to establish that they have no knowledge of illegal electronic surveillance.

Before yesterday's grand jury session began, prosecutors took unusual steps to prevent news reporters from observing who was to appear before the panel. The preparations included moving the grand jury to a different room, accessible from two entrances, one of which is reachable through a back elevator.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert, who heads the renewed federal investigation into the Watergate bugging and related matters, said the new arrangements were ordered because a circus atmosphere had developed outside the other grand jury room, where reporters have gathered in the last two weeks to watch persons entering and leaving.

Despite the new arrangements, reporters were able to determine that Chapin was in the grand jury room for about 90 minutes, after which he scurried past reporters, smiling but refusing to answer any questions. Outside the courthouse, he entered a brown sports car and sped away.

Segretti, who followed him into the closely guarded grand jury room, was there for about 45 minutes before the grand jury quit for the day at about 5:45 p.m. Prosecutors refused to say whether Segretti would return for more questioning. It could not be determined how long Strachan, a former political aide to White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, was before the grand jury.

According to investigators, Chapin and Strachan both played a role in hiring Segretti to engage in political disruption and spying activities. Chapin, according to FBI records made public, also made arrangements for Segretti to be paid by President Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert W. Kalmbach, and Strachan allegedly put Watergate conspirator Liddy in touch with Segretti to merge two nominally separate spying-and-sabotage operations: one run by the White House and the other by the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

Another witness to appear before the grand jury yesterday was Robert Reisner, a former aide to Jeb Stuart Magruder, the deputy director of the

Nixon re-election campaign. Reisner, who has also been contacted by the Senate's investigating committee, was presumably before the grand jury yesterday to be asked about McCord's hearsay allegations that Magruder was among high presidential associates who had advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging.

During his appearance before both the grand jury and the Senate committee, McCord reportedly testified that Liddy told him that the plans and budget for the Watergate operation were approved during a February meeting in then Attorney General Mitchell's office that was also attended by presidential counsel John W. Dean III and Jeb Stuart Magruder, the deputy director of the Nixon re-election campaign. Mitchell, Dean and Magruder have repeatedly denied any involvement in illegal wiretapping operations.

Although McCord claims no first-hand knowledge of those persons' alleged involvement in such activities, he reportedly has provided both the grand jury and Senate investigators with several important leads dealing with that aspect of his testimony. Reisner was expected to be asked by prosecutors yesterday about some of the leads provided by McCord.

Both Senate and Justice Department investigators have confirmed that Mitchell, Dean, Liddy and Magruder were all present during a February meeting in Mitchell's office but have thus far have unable to substantiate that the bugging was discussed.

DeVan L. Shumway, spokesman for the Nixon re-election committee, said yesterday that Mitchell does not recall such a February meeting, and that Mitchell first met Liddy on June 15, 1972, at least three months after the alleged meeting.

In seeking corroboration of McCord's testimony, Senate sources said yesterday that staff members of the select committee have talked to Yicki Chern, Reisner's secretary at the Nixon committee, and that she provided an appointment book or calendar confirming a scheduled meeting of Mitchell, Dean, Liddy and Magruder in February.

Miss Chern is also understood to have provided the committee staff with other information. However, reliable Senate sources discounted published reports that the committee has found a witness who can confirm that the bugging was discussed at the meeting.

"In private conversations ... Mitchell has disclosed that on Jan. 24 and Feb. 4, 1972 ... and again in March, he met with G. Gordon Liddy ... " SFChronicle, NYTimes Svc, 20 Apr 73.