

Hill Bug Unit Aide Quits Job

Investigator Guilty in '66 Eavesdropping

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Harold K. Lipset, chief investigator for the Senate's select Watergate investigating committee, resigned yesterday after learning that the press was about to report that he pleaded guilty to a charge of illegal electronic eavesdropping in New York in a 1966 case.

Lipset, a San Francisco private detective and electronics expert, acknowledged yesterday that he had pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge involving placement of a tape recorder microphone under the door of a room at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan.

In a telephone interview late yesterday, Lipset said the Watergate committee's chief counsel, Samuel Dash, had known about the guilty plea in the New York bugging case when he hired Lipset to head the Senate's investigation of political espionage in the 1972 presidential campaign.

Dash, whose committee investigation already has been criticized by the White House for a "tidal wave" of leaks to the press, acknowledged yesterday that he knew of Lipset's guilty plea and said he saw no problem in hiring the investigator because of it.

"Hal wouldn't be a good investigator if he had never got one or two jams," Lipset said yesterday. "He has an excellent reputation among lawyers, district attorneys and his colleagues."

Dash said he did not inform Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.), chairman of the investigating committee, of the guilty plea when Lipset was hired. Dash said he informed the senator of the matter yesterday and that Ervin concurred in Lipset's decision to resign, "because otherwise it would distract from our investigation." Ervin was not available for comment.

In a prepared statement released yesterday, Lipset said: "Because of my belief that the work of this select committee is of the utmost importance to the welfare of this country, I am choosing to resign as a special investigator rather than cause any embarrassment to the committee, its chairman, or staff."

"I wish to state unequivocally that I am indeed proud of my record as an investigator and I am not leaving the staff because of any personal feelings of guilt but rather to insure that my presence in no way impedes the vitally important work."

Lipset added: "It is my belief that the efforts to discredit me come from the enemies of the committee who are seeking to interfere with its work. I can only hope that I am the only one on the staff

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to fall victim to such unfair tactics." He did not name the purported enemies.

At least four publications were reportedly planning articles on Lipset's background.

In the 1966 New York case, Lipset was one of 28 persons indicted on felony charges of wiretapping and electronic surveillance.

The charges against Lipset involved eavesdropping in a marital investigation of a San Francisco stockbroker. Lipset pleaded guilty to a lesser misdemeanor offense and was given a suspended sentence of indefinite length.

The details of the New York conviction were published about a year ago in Newsday. At that time Lipset said the charges were reduced to a misdemeanor through plea bargaining with the prosecutors.

The Newsday report last year was prompted by the hiring of Lipset to conduct a \$100,000 investigation of the Nassau County (N.Y.) jail by the county district attorney's office. The district attorney told Newsday he had known of the guilty plea when he hired Lipset.

Court records in California show that Lipset was indicted there in 1951 on charges of conspiring to defraud the government. He was acquitted when a judge ruled that the government had not proved its case. The acquittal was ordered even before the defense had been presented, Lipset said yesterday.

In 1965, Lipset showed a Senate committee the most modern electronic eavesdropping device of that time — a martini olive. "The olive is the transmitting unit," Lipset said. "The toothpick is the antenna."