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Watergate Called Part of Vast Plan

By Jack Anderson

Watergate conspirator Howard Hunt has told a federal grand jury that he and Gordon Liddy traveled to Miami under aliases in December, 1971, to set up a vast spy mission against the Democrats.

As part of the mission, Hunt, a former Central Intelligence Agency sleuth, went to the CIA's placement bureau, which willingly provided him with the name of a locksmith skilled in "lockpicking" and opening "a locked room." The locksmith, Thomas Amato, said he'd rather sailboat with his family than spy for the GOP, Hunt testified.

The articulate Hunt, who once paid a secret visit to ITT memo-writer Dita Beard in an ill-fitting red wig, said he disguised his name during the Miami mission out of habit. As a CIA man he had often traveled under false papers in case he was hijacked to Cuba, he said.

It was natural, then, that when he went to Miami with Liddy, the same air of mystery that surrounded Hunt's CIA work and his numerous published thrillers prevailed.

Hunt told the grand jury that his and Liddy's main target was information on the Democratic National Convention in Miami, and especially on the role of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) who then seemed to have "a lead" among the candidates. Hunt

testified that "when Kennedy ... would in fact be a candidate" was the big question for Liddy, the flamboyant counsel for the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

But Hunt, traveling as "Ed Warren" and Liddy, as "George Leonard," had far more in mind than just espionage on Kennedy's place in the presidential race. They checked into Miami Beach's plush Playboy Plaza and met with Hunt's old "comrade in arms," ex-CIA agent Jack Bauman. What Liddy, who was running the Miami venture, wanted from Bauman was no less than total "intelligence" on everything the Democrats were doing "in terms of political action," Hunt swore.

Total Intelligence

Obviously awed at the breadth of this mandate for spying, the prosecutor in the grand jury asked Hunt, "What kind of Democratic activities?" Hunt reiterated: "Political activities."

Under questioning, Hunt spelled out for the jurors Liddy's grandiose master scheme. For one thing, Liddy wanted to discover all that the Democrats were doing "against each other." He wanted to know all their motivations, who was strong enough to "knock another man out of position" and who at any moment was "gaining ascendancy," Hunt asserted.

The Liddy blueprint also

called for spying on those candidates close to "radical people," reports on where all candidates were at all times and how many hotel rooms each candidate's delegations were occupying.

Faced with this demand for nearly total knowledge of the opposition, the capable Bauman told Hunt and Liddy that "his services would come very high," Hunt testified. In fact, said Hunt, Bauman wanted payment in the form of a "trust fund [for] the future of his children."

The Playboy Plaza meeting ended with Bauman agreeing to "give the matter some consideration and [to] let us know." A few days later, Bauman sat down again with Hunt at the Hay Adams hotel just across Lafayette Park from the White House. As Hunt gloomily described it to the grand jury, Bauman said he "was not going to cooperate" with the master spying scheme.

At about the same time, the conspirators got the bad news on Amato's preference for sailing. When the prosecutor asked Hunt why they needed a lockpicker, Hunt said Liddy told him that in "ensuing months" there would be a "wide variety" of tasks, among them lockpicking. Later, observed Hunt pointedly to the grand jury, he found out exactly what Liddy meant. Presuma-

bly Hunt meant to break-in at Democratic headquarters in Washington's Watergate complex.

White House Offices

In the course of his appearances before the grand jury, Hunt testified that Liddy had a White House office and pass at the very time he was plotting missions against the Democrats. Hunt, too, had a White House office which the Secret Service had secured with a special lock, he said. His papers were in a three-way combination safe, which White House aides cracked after Hunt's arrest.

It was in the White House and, once, in Hunt's kitchen at home, that Liddy unfolded some of his plans for activities against the Democrats.

Hunt kept \$8,500 in cash in his White House safe for Liddy in case speedy funding was needed on weekends for Liddy's Mission Impossible duties. The money finally was turned over by Hunt to lawyer Douglas Caddy, after the Watergate housebreakers were captured on June 17, 1972. Caddy was the first lawyer to step in on behalf of the Watergate suspects.

Footnote: While the Bauman approach failed, there is evidence that the Watergate gang was planning other spying against the Democrats at the time they were captured.