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Hunt Was Denied Files From Pentagon

By Michael Getler

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The Pentagon yesterday disclosed that convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. tried several times in the fall of 1971 to see classified Defense Department documents on the Pentagon Papers, but that these requests were all turned down.

Hunt, who was working for the White House, at the

time, then apparently turned to the State Department, where he was permitted to copy some 240 classified diplomatic cables bearing on Vietnam policy.

Late yesterday, State Department spokesman Charles W. Bray reported that two high level department officials—then Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson and Deputy Under Secretary William Macomber —

specifically authorized Hunt to review the classified material in September, 1971.

Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said that Hunt's requests were rejected "because of a firmly established policy of the Secretary of Defense that in legal matters we respond only to the Department of Justice."

Hunt's request to the Pentagon apparently was made

by Hunt himself,* while the request to the State Department came from a White House aide.

Hunt held a "top secret" clearance while working for the White House.

There were numerous indications yesterday that the contrast in the handling of Hunt's requests by the two departments was embarrassing the State Department.

Early in the day, Bray declined to elaborate on yes-

terday's announcement of Hunt's access to State Department files.

But by yesterday afternoon, Bray issued his statement naming Johnson and Macomber as the officials who had approved Hunt's request.

Bray said the authorization was given at the request both in writing and by phone from Egil Krogh and David Young, former White House aides who have since resigned.

The original request was in a memorandum dated Aug 11, 1971, to Macomber. Bray said it was "specifically addressed to investigations relating to Pentagon Papers leakage and requested . . . copies of all cables which had passed between the State Department or the

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White House on one hand and our embassy in Saigon for the period of April 1-Nov. 30, 1963."

In grand jury testimony made available Monday at the Pentagon Papers trial of Daniel Ellsberg, Hunt claimed that he had in fact been ordered by President Nixon's former counsel, Charles W. Colson, to "create" two cables which would implicate the Kennedy administration in the assassination of South Vietnamese President Diem more directly than any of the cables Hunt had been able to find in the State Department files.

Colson has subsequently denied giving any such order to Hunt.

In defending the State Department action late yesterday, Bray said "on the facts as we have established them, the department is satisfied that its response to the request from the White House was proper and that those involved within the

Department of State acted with proper authority.

"We will continue to respond to requests from the White House," Bray added. "It is our obligation to do so since we in effect work for the White House."

At the Pentagon, however, Friedheim's repeated reference to long-standing Defense Department policy that information relating to legal matters would be supplied only to the Justice Department reflects what many defense officials privately suggest has been greater caution on the part of the Pentagon in dealing with the White House on politically sensitive matters.

Friedheim said yesterday that while the requests by Hunt were turned down by Pentagon general counsel J. Fred Buzhardt, former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird "to the best of my knowledge" was also "aware of the requests."

Nothing Laird's "experienced in Washington" (he served eight terms as a Republican congressman), Friedheim said the former

Defense Secretary had insisted on a single, "appropriate channel" for White House requests to the Pentagon through Laird's former liaison man, Carl Wallace.

Friedheim said yesterday that Hunt made several "very cursory contacts" over a week's time and at least one visit to the Pentagon seeking access to material.

He also said G. Gordon Liddy, who also worked as a White House security expert and eventually broke into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office with Hunt, may have tried to gain access to Pentagon documents relating to Vietnam.

Friedheim said it was not clear exactly what the two men wanted, but that it was apparent to Buzhardt that it was connected to an ongoing investigation and that such requests would only be granted if they came through Justice.

Friedheim indicated that no calls had been received from White House aides Young, who worked for the National Security Council, or Krogh.

*Correction by Friedheim, Wx Post 11 May 73 (AP)