

C.I.A. Aide Says Gray Told Him in 1972

Threat to Leave F.B.I. Over Cover-Up Related

By MARJORIE HUNTER MAY 18, 1973
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WASHINGTON, May 17—The deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency says that L. Patrick Gray 3d, then acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, told him almost a year ago he had recommended that all those involved in the Watergate affair be discharged.

Lieut. Gen. Vernon Walters also quoted Mr. Gray as having told him that he was "prepared to resign" over apparent White House efforts to implicate the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. in covering up the Watergate operation.

The previously undisclosed points were made in a sworn affidavit presented to several Congressional committees this week by General Walters but made public only today.

The Senate Armed Services Committee had released a summary of the Walters affidavit earlier this week, but the summary failed to mention either of these matters.

In his affidavit, General Walters did not identify to whom Mr. Gray said he had recommended the dismissals. The break-in at Democratic headquarters occurred last June 17. General Walters said that Mr. Gray told him July 12 he had recommended the dismissal of those responsible.

Mr. Gray testified here today before a Federal grand jury investigating the Watergate affair. However, he was not available for comment on matters raised by General Walters.

Resignation of Gray

Mr. Gray resigned last April 27 as acting director of the F.B.I. following disclosure that he had destroyed documents obtained from a key conspirator in the Watergate scandal after receiving them at a meeting with two former ranking White House officials, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean 3d.

General Walters appeared again today at a closed hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, along with Richard Helms, former director of the C.I.A. and now Ambassador to Iran.

Later, as he left the hearing room, General Walters declined to elaborate on matters he had touched upon in his earlier affidavit. Mr. Helms, too, declined comment.

Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri, acting chairman of the committee, said today that all C.I.A. witnesses who appeared before his panel in the last week had "stated that they did not know whether the President" knew about White House efforts to involve the agency in the apparent cover-up of the Watergate affair.

"But it's hard for me to visualize that the President knew nothing about this," Senator said.

Reports of White House attempts to involve the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. in covering up the Watergate affairs were detailed in General Walters's statement, as well as in the committee summary released earlier this week.

Called to White House

General Walters told of how he and Mr. Helms had been called to the White House on June 23 of last year by Mr. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, at that time the President's chief of staff.

"As I recall it," General Walters said, "Mr. Haldeman said that the Watergate incident was causing trouble and was being exploited by the opposition."

The general said that Mr. Haldeman had asked him to go to Mr. Gray and demand that the F.B.I. investigation into certain Nixon re-election campaign funds "laundered" through a Mexico City bank be called off on the ground that "further inquiries into the Mexican aspects of this matter might jeopardize some of the C.I.A.'s covert activities in that area."

The general said that he had done as he was told, but that later he found that the F.B.I. investigation would not jeopardize C.I.A. interests in Mexico and so informed Mr. Dean at the White House.

General Walters indicated that the White House had continued to press both the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. on the matter.

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The general said that on July 5 he conferred again with Mr. Gray and told him that "I felt that attempts to cover this up or to implicate the C.I.A. or F.B.I. would be detrimental to their integrity and a disservice to the President and the country."

"I would have no part in this and was quite prepared to resign on this issue," the general continued. "He [Mr. Gray] said that he shared my views regarding the importance of the integrity of our agencies and he, too, was prepared to resign on this issue."

General Walters said that when he saw Mr. Gray again on July 12, "I said that I had told Dean that the best solution would be to fire those responsible. Gray said he had made the same recommendation."



Richard Helms, left, former C.I.A. chief, with former deputy, Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., now Marine Corps commandant, before Senate Armed Forces Committee appearance.

Associated Press

Appearing last week before Senate investigators preparing for the full-scale watergate inquiry that opened today, Mr. Gray reportedly said that during a telephone conversation on July 6, he had mentioned to President Nixon that there was some confusion about the role of the White House aides in the Watergate investigation and that their actions could cause trouble for the President.

A source close to the committee said that Mr. Gray had told that panel's investigators that he had said to the President, "Mr. President, you are being wounded by men around you, using the F.B.I. and the C.I.A."

However, Mr. Gray reportedly told the Senate investigators that he had not informed the President of his suspicions of a "cover-up" because he felt it would be improper and might appear as if he were seeking guidance from Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Gray was named acting director of the F.B.I. last summer following the death of J. Edgar Hoover on May 2. President Nixon nominated Mr. Gray to be director on Feb. 17 of this year, but his confirmation bogged down over the Watergate disclosures.

General Walters's affidavit also told of being asked by Mr. Dean last year to help cover up the Watergate case by paying bail and salaries for the men involved in the break-in at Democratic headquarters.

The general said that on June 27 Mr. Dean called him to the White House and said that some witnesses in the Watergate break-in "were getting scared and were wobbling." It was then that Mr. Dean asked the C.I.A. to furnish bail and pay salaries of the suspects, "using covert action funds for this purpose," the general said.

Declaring that he had refused to go along, General Walters said that "if ordered to do it, I would ask to see the President and explain the reasons for my refusal."

The general said further that he had told Mr. Dean that "what was now a painful wound could become a mortal one. What was now a conventional explosion could be turned into a multi-megaton explosion. I again advised him to fire the responsible parties."