

McCord Motives Seem to Puzzle Senators

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Jamse W. McCord Jr. went to great lengths today to explain why he had participated in the Watergate burglary and wiretapping.

Under repeated questioning by the Senate committee investigating the Watergate case, McCord replied at times that he realized he was breaking the law and at other times that he thought the break-in must have been legal.

But he said repeatedly that his basic motive was that he believed his activities had been approved by President Nixon and John N. Mitchell, the Attorney General at the time.

"I felt the President of the United States had set into motion this operation," McCord told the committee.

He said that he had received assurances from Mr. G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr., two of the men who later pleaded guilty in the Watergate case, that the President and Mr. Mitchell had sanctioned the break-in.

McCord acknowledged that in conducting security arrangements for the Mitchell family he had had many opportunities to question Mr. Mitchell during the time the burglary was being planned but that he never did so because he trusted Liddy explicitly.

Meetings Discussed

He said that Liddy had told him of regular meetings with Mr. Mitchell, Jeb Stuart Magruder, a key official at the Committee for the Re-election of the President, and John W. Dean 3d, counsel to the President. McCord said Liddy told him the Watergate break-in was being planned at these meetings.

Mr. Mitchell as acknowledged that he attended meetings at which wiretapping was discussed, but he has said that he opposed all such plans. Mr. Magruder said in court this year that he did not know of the plans. Mr. Dean has not commented on whether he knew of the proposals.

McCord also told the committee that one of the purposes of the wiretaps on Democratic party headquarters was to obtain information about violent demonstrations.

He said that he knew of plans for such demonstrations — by such groups as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War — because he had access to confidential memorandums from the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department. Robert C. Mardian, a former head of the division who was working for the President's re-election committee at the time,

arranged for him to receive the memorandums, McCord testified.

Questioning Is Intense

Senators on the committee seemed to believe that McCord had not given a full explanation of his motives.

"I have the nagging feeling that there's more to it than that," Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the panel's ranking Republican, said after the hearing.

Senator Baker questioned McCord intensely during the hearing. At one point, there was the following exchange:

SENATOR BAKER: What was your motivation? Why did you do this?

MCCORD: There were several motivations, but one of the basic motivations was the fact that this man, the Attorney General, had approved it in his offices over a series of meetings in which he had obviously given careful consideration to it, while he was the top legal officer of the U.S. Government; and that the counsel to the President had sat in with him during such discussions; the fact that I was advised that it was within the Attorney General's purview and authority to authorize such operations

if it were in the National interest to do so.

Q. Did you believe that?

A. I believed he had the authority to do it. I was also aware that many things came over the Attorney General's desk that I was not privy to, that Mr. Liddy was not privy to, but which the Attorney General was privy to . . . which might provide a justification for such an operation.

McCord then added, "I felt that the Attorney General in his position as the top legal officer, if this operation were clearly illegal, would turn it down out of hand."

Inouye Not Satisfied

McCord's explanation did not satisfy Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii.

"Why did you," he asked McCord, "as one who has served his country so well, as a colonel in Air Force, distinguished service in the F.B.I. and C.I.A. decide to carry out these illegal acts?"

McCord responded with the same answer he had given to Senator Baker and to other committee members — that he thought the Attorney General and the White House had sanctioned the operation.

McCord, saying that one of his duties was to provide personal security for Mr. Mitchell, told the committee that he spoke with Mr. Mitchell regularly but never mentioned the plans to break into the Democratic headquarters. He said that he thought that if Mr. Mitchell wanted to talk about the subject the former Attorney General would have brought it up.

McCord also said that he had a private meeting early in 1972 with Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Magruder, at which no one else was present. But, here again, McCord said he did not ask them about the Watergate plans.

In explaining how he happened to receive the confidential data from the Justice Department, McCord declared that, as security chief of the re-election committee, he feared demonstrations against the committee by radical groups.

McCord said that he mentioned his concern to Robert C. Odle Jr., the administrative officer of the re-election committee, and that Mr. Odle, in turn, sent a memorandum on the subject to Mr. Mitchell in early May, 1972. By that time, Mr. Mitchell was head of the re-election committee.

Mr. Odle testified before the committee yesterday but did not mention the memorandum.

'Almost Daily' Material

McCord said that a few days later he was called by Mr. Mardian, who sent him to the Internal Security Division offices. McCord said he also received a return copy of Mr. Odle's memorandum on which Mr. Mitchell had initialed his approval.

From then until he was arrested on June 17, McCord testified, he received information from the Justice Department "almost daily."

McCord said that he thought Democratic Presidential candidates were receiving similar information. But persons familiar with the operations of the Justice Department said afterward that information in the Internal Security Division was closely held and, in normal circumstances, went only to top Government officials.

Frank Mankiewicz, campaign manager for Senator George McGovern, the Democratic Presidential candidate, said in a statement tonight that the McGovern campaign had not received such information from the Justice Department.

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, remarked that it was the first time he had ever heard of confidential material from the Internal Security Division being given to a political candidate.