

Ehrlichman on 'The Plumbers'

Washington

Former presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman said yesterday there was "no functional relationship" between a special White House unit seeking to plug national security leaks and the men involved in the Watergate break-in.

Ehrlichman, in an interview with ABC reporter Stephen Geer, said only two of the seven men directly involved with the Watergate case had been a part of the special unit known as "The Plumbers."

He said the special unit had been set up in the belief that "people with White House backing would be able to better galvanize the departments and agencies into action to try and plug their own leaks.

"The special unit in the White House was designed to stop the leaks of national security secrets and bore no functional relationship to the Watergate at all," Ehrlichman said.

"The only relationship is that two people who happened to be in the special unit — one of them wasn't actually in it, he was attached to it for a brief time— left the White House and

then retired from government . . . and then went to work for the Committee to Re-Elect (the President) and they then engaged in, or allegedly engaged in, acts while at the Committee to Re-Elect which are known as the Watergate."

(Ehrlichman did not mention any names but two men, Watergate conspirators G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, are said to have been members of the special unit.)

When he learned about the break-in, Ehrlichman told Geer, his reaction was one of "curiosity and skepticism" because he did not believe there was "anything worth going after" at Democratic National Headquarters.

Ehrlichman said he does not believe that the Watergate will hurt the Republican party but that the President "obviously has at the moment a difficult problem in governing."

He said that the case should be cleared up as quickly as possible and that he is ready at any time to testify before the Senate Watergate committee.

"I'm ready, willing and able," he said. "I'll come any time they call me."

United Press