

Chilean Break-Ins Puzzle

Watergate Investigators

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One unsolved puzzle that Watergate investigators are studying is the identity of intruders who broke into the offices and residences of Chilean diplomats in Washington and New York at least four times from April, 1971 to May, 1972.

Four break-ins against Chileans took place in the 14 months immediately preceding the break-in at the Democrats' Watergate headquarters last June. They also occurred at a time when the Chilean Government was negotiating with the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation over compensation for Chile's takeover of the huge conglomerate's telephone subsidiary.

Because of far more sensational disclosures, Watergate investigators have not actively pursued the Chilean case in recent weeks, beyond asking a question or two about the break-ins during interrogations of the Watergate burglars.

However, Senate investigators have informed both the Senate Watergate committee and the Watergate prosecutors in Washington about the details of the four break-ins at the offices and residences of the Chileans.

3 Occurred in New York

Furthermore, a member of the special intelligence unit of the New York Police Department was said to have concluded that the three break-ins that occurred in Manhattan were no routine burglaries. And investigators in Washington said that the four break-ins had followed similar patterns.

They were apparently done by professionals, with a few items taken to make the break-ins appear to be burglaries, investigators said. Other valuable items were left behind, however, and sensitive papers were disturbed, possibly in the course of being photographed. Investigators reconstruct the break-ins as follows:

Then first known break-in occurred on the afternoon of April 5, 1971 at the Manhattan residence on Lexington Avenue of Humberto Diaz-Casaneva, Chile's Ambassador to the United Nations. The Ambassador reportedly told the police that the intruders had stolen such items as a hair-dryer and a pair of boots and disturbed papers.

The next break-in was said to have taken place six days later at the East 38th Street apartment in Manhattan of Javier Urrutia, president of the Chilean Development Corporation and a close economic adviser to Chile's president, Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens.

Pistol Stolen

Mr. Urrutia told the police that a .25-caliber Bernardelli pistol had been stolen. However, a fur coat in a closet was reportedly untouched. Government papers were said to have been disturbed, and chewing gum was edged into the apartment's lock, a familiar practice of professional intruders that gives them time to escape if they are surprised during the course of an entry.

The third reported break-in took place on Feb. 10, 1972, investigators said, at the New York residence on East 46th Street of Victor Rioseco, formerly a Chilean official at the United Nations. A radio and a television set were reportedly taken and papers disturbed.

The fourth and most publicized break-in took place over the weekend of May 13, 1972, at the Chilean Embassy in Washington. Files of the Ambassador and his first secretary, Fernando Bachelet, were reportedly rifled and two radios taken.

Chilean officials have been ordered by their Government not to discuss the matter, but sources close to the case said that the former Chilean Ambassador, Orlando Letelier, had confirmed that the Washington intruders apparently were seeking sensitive Government documents.

Speculation by Investigators

Capitol Hill investigators have speculated that the intruders might have been seeking evidence of links between Cuba and Chile, or looking for politically sensitive documents relating to the take-over by Chile of I.T.T. properties.

No evidence has turned up that members of the team that broke into the Watergate were involved in the entries, although hints that some of them may have participated have come from the authorities in Florida.

First reports about a break-in at the Chilean Embassy began to circulate in Miami a week or so after the Watergate break-in of June 17, 1972, and there was speculation that the two might have been related. That link never has been proved, and some investigators doubt that it exists.

One explanation offered for the Chilean break-in was that if any Cuban-Americans participated, as was the case in the Watergate, they might have been looking for documents that would indicate collusion between the Chilean and Castro governments.

Shortly after the speculation began in Miami, Chilean officials acknowledged the break-in and reported it to the city police, who started an investigation that has been inconclusive.

Earlier this month, a Cuban named Felipe de Diego was interrogated by State Attorney Richard E. Gerstein in Florida regarding participation in the break-in at the offices of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in Los Angeles.

He and his attorney indicated that, if granted immunity, Mr. de Diego might shed new light on other surreptitious operations in Washington. Investigators in Miami later indicated that these operations might include the Chilean break-in or break-ins.