

Excerpts From Ehrlichman's

Here are key excerpts from statement yesterday by former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Intelligence Operations. This portion deals with the CIA and E. Howard Hunt Jr.

I received a phone call from Gen. Robert Cushman, deputy director of the CIA, in late August, 1971 (he says it was Aug. 27), saying that Hunt was receiving aid from the agency, which was becoming potentially awkward. I asked him whether Hunt was acting for the agency or the White House. He said the White House. I asked him what his assignment was from the White House. He said he did not know.

In response to his request I told the general I would take responsibility for the agency terminating its assistance to Hunt and, if there were any squawks or kickbacks from anyone in the White House, to simply refer them to me.

In 1969, in connection with a very different case, I had had occasion to discuss the statutory limitations of CIA activity with Gen. Cushman in some detail. He had clearly spelled out the limits at that time and explained the CIA's continuous concern that it not go beyond statutory bounds.

It is somewhat ironic that Gen. Cushman's testimony makes much of his "long-time relationship" with me and the fact that he took my requests as equivalent to absolute mandate in view of my White House position.

In point of fact, although I think I was introduced to the general once prior to 1968, and saw him to say hello at White House social functions a couple of times, this conversation in 1969 was the first time we had ever seriously spoken to one another.

And, of course, on this occasion he turned down my request for assistance.

The next time I can recall talking to him was in August, 1971, when he called to ask that CIA aid to Hunt be cut off. I was entirely in sympathy with his request to cut off aid to Hunt based on his conclusion, that Hunt's requests had become excessive. I did not even question him for additional details; I simply accepted his conclusion.

I also recall wondering at the time how Hunt had obtained help from the CIA, in the first place. It occurred to me that if anyone later complained to me about this cut-off, I would probably learn how Hunt got started there.

No one ever did complain.

At no time during the August, 1971, conversation did the general imply, suggest or state that I had initiated or sponsored Hunt's assistance from the CIA. Rather, the general spoke as though he were turning to me for help out of a situation created by others.

This excerpt deals with the CIA and the Watergate developments in June of 1972.

The President asked Mr. Haldeman to convene a meeting with Director Helms and Deputy Director Walters after the Watergate investigation

began. Mr. Haldeman told me the President wished me to "sit in." As it happened, my office was used for the meeting.

Mr. Haldeman said that the President was concerned about the effect of the FBI investigation upon the agency. The President intended to require a full, vigorous FBI investigation with no strings but believed that the trail might lead to agency people or activities either in this country or abroad. The President was especially concerned about agency activities in Mexico which might be disclosed.

Mr. Helms and Gen. Walters were asked first, if the CIA had a part in the Watergate break-in. They replied that it did not.

They were asked if a very vigorous examination of the past of the burglars or their money sources might jeopardize the secrecy of present or past CIA operations, including those in Mexico. They replied that no past operations would be jeopardized, so far as they could tell then. But Gen. Walters would not say that the CIA had no concern on the question of Mexican operations. I got the impression that Mr. Haldeman's shot had hit some target.

Apparently Director Helms also took Gen. Walters' reply at face value. . . . He testified that he told Gen. Walters after the meeting that if the FBI investigation did run into the CIA Mexican operation, the established procedure should be followed. See also Gen. Walters' memcons [memoranda of conversation], es-

pecially the memorandum of 28 June, 1972.

As a result of this equivocal response by Gen. Walters respecting Mexican operations, he was asked to make contact with Acting FBI Director Gray and give him all the facts. I believe the general called Gray from my outer office to arrange to see him at once.

Helms and Walters were told that John Dean was following the Watergate matter closely for the President and any future White House contact could be with him. I'm not sure whether they were told this on the occasion of the meeting or later, but I do recall having some part in getting Walters to talk to Dean. I believe I also informed Dean of the meeting, of my impression of Walters' response regarding CIA Mexican operations, and I believe I told Dean that Walters would be working with Gray on the problem.

Later Dean told me he had been in touch with Walters and that the CIA did not believe an investigation would harm their operations. I was unaware of Dean's meetings or conversations with Walters regarding use of CIA money for salaries for the defendants until the news reports this month about them.

During the first week of July, 1972, the President told me Pat Gray told him on the telephone that Gen. Walters had told Gray there was no CIA objection to a full FBI investigation of the Mexican aspects of the Wa-

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tergate case. The President said he then instructed Gray to conduct a full investigation.

The President told me then that he still personally believed and feared that the FBI investigation might harm the agency.

He said he believed the CIA would be making a mistake if it pretended an investigation would not disclose some of its current operations. He said he hoped the general and other CIA management were not covering up for their subordinates.

The President said substantially: a man makes a grave mistake in covering up for subordinates. That was President Truman's error in the Hiss case when he instructed the FBI not to cooperate.

The President instructed that neither Gray nor Walters were to be interfered with in pressing the investigation. I conveyed a message to Pat Gray, as a result, that he alone was to determine the scope of the investigation.

In retrospect, had Gen. Walters at the June, 1972, meeting said to Mr. Halde- man and me the things he apparently said later, I have no doubt he would have saved himself a trip to see

Director Pat Gray. Had we been told flatly there was no "Mexican connection" to the CIA at that time, that would have ended the matter as far as I was concerned.

But, as his own memoranda demonstrate, that is not how Gen. Walters answered our questions.

Had it not been for the general's encouragement of the President's suspicion about the effect on CIA operations in Mexico, I have no doubt the matter would have ended moments after it began in my office.

I believe the President's questions about the possible threat to the CIA had to be asked and answered, in the national interest. In retrospect it would seem that any resulting problem did not arise from the question being asked. Rather, they arose from the equivocal answer given to that question.

SUMMARY

No one person can provide all the answers to all the questions that can be asked about White House conduct relating to the CIA over the 1969-1972 term.

The National Security Council staff and Dr. Kissinger had day-to-day contact and liaison with the agency for the White House.

For others to become involved in a matter relating to the CIA was relatively rare. Over the four years I don't believe I had more than six or seven personal contacts with the agency.

I, for one, treated such contacts with as much delicacy and care as possible. My business with the CIA was almost invariably at the President's direction but, even so, I consistently deferred to agency executives' views of the propriety of the requests I transmitted.

I recognize the difficulty for the committee in my testimony in the matter of the Cushman telephone call. . .

But, in view of the general's categorical statement on the record, and the absence of any witness, or documentary or other objective evidence to "prove the negative" for me, can only tell the committee the state of my recollection and what I know of the surrounding circumstances, and rely upon the committee to find the truth.

It may be the committee will conclude that the question of the identity of the caller is really peripheral to its inquiry, or cannot be conclusively resolved. It may be that both the general and I are correct; some third person may have called and

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given or mentioned my name. This would seem to have been the general's recollection in January, 1973.

However begun, the Hunt aid was cut off in time to have avoided CIA involvement in the Fielding break-in.

In fact, there actually may have been no CIA aid employed in the break-in.

I concurred totally in the cut-off, consistent with my practice of deferring to Agency views concerning legal limitation on CIA activities.

While I attended the Helms-Walters meeting and have given you my best recollection of what took place, it was not until about a week or so later that I understood the President's true concerns and the significance of the meetings.

The press has said that we attempted to coerce the CIA into accepting blame for the Watergate break-in at that meeting. We did not.

As the President has said, to the extent that the CIA had a stake or interest in the outcome of the Mexican investigation (as Gen. Walters indicated the CIA might) we were concerned that this information be given to Director Gray at the FBI. I consider my participation in that meeting to have been entirely proper.