

Security Issue

The CIA Memos On Watergate --New Details

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The FBI, the Central Intelligence Agency and high White House officials viewed the investigation in the weeks after the Watergate bugging in June 1972, as a potential political bombshell and not as a legitimate matter of national security, according to a series of high-level CIA memorandums.

The memorandums were submitted last month to a Senate subcommittee by Lieutenant General Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the CIA and James B. Schlesinger, CIA director.

According to the documents, President Nixon's top White House aides repeatedly warned that the FBI investigation into the Watergate episode could lead to high political figures and suggested that it "not be pushed further."

Copies of the documents, whose contents had not previously been disclosed, were obtained by the New York Times.

STATEMENT

President Nixon in his 4000-word statement on May 22 about the Watergate affair, said that he had forbidden the FBI to interfere either with covert CIA operations or with matters of national security that had been handled by a special investigations unit set up in 1971 to investigate the publication of the Pentagon papers leak and other matters.

The President, without fully explaining the circumstances, said in his statement that "elements of the early post-Watergate reports led me to suspect, incorrectly, that the CIA had been involved." He added that he had requested his two chief

aides, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, "to insure that the FBI would not carry its investigation into areas that might compromise these covert national security areas or those of the CIA."

Subsequent testimony last month before a Senate appropriations subcommittee on intelligence, headed by Senator John L. McClellan (Dem-Ark.), brought allegations that Haldeman and Ehrlichman had urged General Walters to seek a halt to the FBI investigation of a Mexican money-laundering operation that had provided the operating funds for the Watergate break-in team.

MEMOS

The nine Walters memorandums and one submitted by Schlesinger also provided these disclosures:

• L. Patrick Gray, then acting FBI director, had been urged by some high level officials to force Harold H. Titus Jr., the U.S. attorney

Back Page Col. 6

From Page 1

ney for the District of Columbia, to stop his attempts to subpoena the financial records of the Republican re-election committee as part of the investigation into the financing of the Watergate team. Walters quoted Gray as saying that "he could not (stop the subpoena). Whoever

ing approval from Ehrlichman — and was told by Dean that "some of the accused were getting scared and 'wobbling.'"

At another meeting on June 28, Dean was quoted by Walters as declaring that "the problem was how to

The Mexican money connection repeatedly mentioned in the memorandums revolved around four checks for \$89,000 that were drawn on the Mexico City bank account of Manuel Ogarrío Da-

stop the FBI investigation beyond the five suspects . . . Dean then asked hopefully whether I could do anything or had any suggestions."

The general's reply, as he candidly wrote in his memorandum, was "that the af-

guerre, a Mexico City lawyer, and subsequently forwarded to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President on April 6, 1972, the day before the new federal campaign contributions law went

er wanted this done should talk to the attorney general and see if there was any legal way to do this. He (Gray) could not."

• John W. Dean III, the former White House counsel, expressed the belief on June 26 that Bernard L. Barker, a member of the Watergate team, "had been involved in a clandestine entry into the Chilean Embassy." There has been no official confirmation that the White House, the Committee for the Re-Election of the President or the Watergate conspirators had any connection with a May 1972, break-in at the Chilean Embassy.

• Dean telephoned Schlesinger at the CIA on Feb. 9, 1973, to seek advice about a pending Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigation into the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. in connection with "the Chilean problem." Schlesinger quoted Dean as saying that "this investigation could be rather explosive."

• Richard Helms, then CIA director, told a meeting of top White House aides on June 23 that he had told Gray by telephone the day before that the CIA had nothing to do with the manipulation or handling of cash inside Mexico. Walters quoted Helms as flatly declaring "none of the suspects (in the Watergate break-in) were working for it nor had worked for the agency in the last two years."

SECURITY

The general further quoted Helms as saying that "he had told Gray that none of his investigations was touching any covert projects of the agency, current or ongoing." Haldeman then replied, according to the Walters memorandum, that the general "could tell Gray that I had talked to the White House and suggested that the investigation not be pushed further." Walters did as requested, according to his own memorandums.

The White House refused to amplify President Nixon's May 22 statement.

In statements issued after appearances before the Senate appropriations subcommittee, both Haldeman and Ehrlichman have denied accusations that they acted

improperly. The former White House aides suggested that any wrongdoing had been initiated by Dean.

IMPEDE 31 MAY

Without mentioning the disclaimer of any CIA involvement that was provided by Helms last June, Haldeman declared in a statement issued Thursday that the White House request for a review of the FBI investigation "was done with no intent or desire to impede or cover up any aspect of the Watergate investigation itself."

Any such activities, he said, were taken without his knowledge.

Ehrlichman, in his statement, quoted Walters as being unable to provide assurances to the White House

More Watergate news on Pages 8-11.

about the possible infringement on CIA activities that would result from an extensive FBI inquiry into the Mexican money trafficking. Ehrlichman also quoted Mr. Nixon as declaring in July 1972, after receiving further assurances that no CIA activities would be compromised, that he still "feared" the harmful effects of the FBI investigation.

COMPARISON

The Walters memorandums provided a strikingly different image of those first meetings in late June about the ongoing FBI investigation.

The general quoted Haldeman as saying on June 23 that the "whole affair was getting embarrassing and it was the President's wish that Walters call on the acting director (of the FBI) and suggest to him that since the five (Watergate) suspects had been arrested, this should be sufficient and that it was not advantageous to have the inquiry pushed."

Walters quoted Gray as declaring in a subsequent meeting on the same day that "this was a most awkward matter to come up during an election year and he would see what he could do."

MEETING 27?

Three days later, according to the general's memorandums, he met privately with Dean — after first get-

fair already had a strong Cuban flavor" and that the Cubans had "a plausible motive for attempting this amateurish job which any skilled technician would deplore. This might be costly but it would be plausible."

into effect. The checks ended up in the bank account of one of the Watergate conspirators.