

C.I.A. MEMOS SHOW POLITICAL FEARS OVER WATERGATE

*Indicate Officials Doubt Inquiry
Concerned National Security*

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By SEYMOUR M. HERSH JUN 4 1973
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WASHINGTON, June 3—The Federal Bureau of Investigation, 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 C.I.A. memorandums.

The memorandums were submitted last month to a Senate subcommittee by Lieut. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the C.I.A., and James B. Schlesinger, Director of Central Intelligence.

According to the documents, President Nixon's top White House aides repeatedly warned that the on-going F.B.I. investigation into the Watergate episode could lead to high political figures.

Copies of the documents, whose contents had not previously been disclosed, were examined and transcribed by The New York Times.

Nixon Order to F.B.I.

President Nixon, in his 4,000-word statement on May 22 about the Watergate affair, said that he had forbidden the F.B.I. to interfere either with on-going covert C.I.A. 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 on the war in Vietnam 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 C.I.A. had been involved." He added that he had requested his two chief aides, H. R. Haldeman and John

D. Ehrlichman, "to insure that the F.B.I. would not carry its investigation into areas that might compromise these covert national security areas or those of the C.I.A."

End to Inquiry Sought

Subsequent testimony last month before a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Intelligence, headed by Senator John L. McClellan, Democrat of Arkansas, brought allegations that Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman had urged General Walters to seek a halt to the F.B.I. investigation of a Mexican money-laundering operation that had provided more than \$100,000 in operating funds for the Watergate break-in team.

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

¶John W. Dean 3d, 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.

¶L. Patrick Gray 3d, then acting F.B.I. director, had been urged by some high level officials to force Harold H. Titus Jr., the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, to stop his attempts to subpoena the financial records of the Republican re-election committee as part of the on-going investigation into the financing of the Watergate team. General Wal-

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Memos of C.I.A. Disclose Political Fears

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ters quoted Mr. Gray as saying: "He could not [stop the subpoena]. Whoever wanted this done should talk to the Attorney General and see if there was any legal way to do this. He [Mr. Gray] could not."

Mr. Dean telephoned Mr. Schlesinger at the C.I.A. on Feb. 9, 1973, to seek advice about a pending Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigation into the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation in connection with "the Chilean problem." Mr. Schlesinger quoted Mr. Dean as saying that "this investigation could be rather explosive." Similar concern was expressed by Mr. Dean about the Foreign Relations Committee's interest in the Chilean Embassy burglary.

Richard Helms, then the Director of Central Intelligence, told a meeting of top White House aides on June 23 that he had told Mr. Gray by telephone the day before that the C.I.A. had nothing to do with the manipulation or handling of cash inside Mexico. General Walters quoted Mr. 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."

The general further quoted Mr. Helms as saying that "he had told Gray that none of his investigations was touching any covert projects of the agency, current or ongoing." Mr. Halderman 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." General 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 Mr. Halderman and Mr. Ehrlichman have denied accusations that they acted improperly. The former White House aides suggested that any wrongdoing had been initiated by Mr. Dean.

Without mentioning the disclaimer of any C.I.A. involvement that was provided by Mr. Helms last June, Mr. Halderman declares in a statement issued Thursday that the White House request for a review of the F.B.I. investigation "was done with no intent or desire to impede or to cover up any aspect of the Watergate investigation itself." Any such activities, he said, were taken without his knowledge.

Mr. Ehrlichman, in his statement, quoted General Walters as being unable to provide assurances to the White House about the possible infringement on C.I.A. activities that would result from an extensive F.B.I. inquiry into the Mexican money trafficking Mr. Ehrlichman also quoted Mr. Nixon as declaring, in July, 1972, after receiving further assurances that no C.I.A. activities would be compromised, that he still "feared" the harmful effects of the F.B.I. investigation.

The Walters memorandums provided a strikingly different

image of those first meetings in late June about the on-going F.B.I. investigation. The general quoted Mr. 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 F.B.I.] 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."

General Walters quoted Mr. 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."

Three days later, according to the general's memorandums, he met privately with Mr. Dean — after first getting approval from Mr. Ehrlichman — and was told by Mr. Dean that "some of the accused were getting scared and 'wobbling'."

At another meeting on June 28, Mr. Dean was quoted by General Walters as declaring that "the problem was how to stop the F.B.I. 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 affair 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."