

Watergate Story On 'Hush Money'

Washington

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell reportedly has told Senate investigators he approved payments to the Watergate conspirators after their arrest to avoid embarrassment to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

Mitchell made the statement in an interview with Watergate committee investigators May 10,* according to a confidential summary made available to the Associated Press by syndicated columnist Jack Anderson.

Mitchell could not be reached for comment.

One convicted conspirator, James W. McCord Jr., has testified that the defendants were offered "hush money" in return for their silence.

The summary provides this account:

Mitchell, who headed the

Nixon re-election committee, learned after the break-in June 17 that two of the arrested men, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, had broken into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Although he resigned from the committee July 1, saying his wife, Martha, issued an ultimatum, Mitchell remained active in the re-election effort, the summary says.

It continues:

"At this point, Mitchell also became aware . . . that the defendants were seeking financial support and Mitchell went along with payments to the defendants rather than risk having other Liddy-Hunt activities exposed before the election."

Associated Press

*Same date Mitchell and Stans indicted in Vesco case, and also when McCord deposition made public in which he says Liddy told him of Mitchell's and Dean's involvement in bugging. (Both, WXPost 11 May.)