

Conflict on How Hunt Got to CIA

Washington

Former presidential aides Charles W. Colson and John D. Ehrlichman have given differing accounts of how Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt approached the Central Intelligence Agency in 1971, Senator John McClellan said yesterday.

The Arkansas Democrat said Colson testified yesterday in a private session that he told Ehrlichman that Hunt "wanted to make contact with the CIA for the White House.

But Ehrlichman had testified earlier that "he knew nothing about that," McClellan said.

CONFLICT

Already in conflict is whether Ehrlichman personally called the then deputy director of the CIA, Marine General Robert Cushman, to clear the way for Hunt. Cushman has said he recalls that Ehrlichman made such a call. Ehrlichman has sworn that he couldn't recall making such a contact, and believes he would remember if he did.

McClellan released one paragraph of Colson's testimony before his Senate appropriations subcommittee:

"On the 7th or possibly 8th of July, 1971 . . . I told Mr. Ehrlichman that Mr. Hunt wanted to establish liaison with the CIA as well as with other government agencies. The need for contact with the CIA was immediate in that one of Mr. Hunt's first assignments was to interview Lieutenant Colonel Lucien Conein who had been a

principal CIA operative during the period of the Diem coup."

COUP

Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated in the 1963 overthrow of his government. Conein is portrayed in the Pentagon Papers as having met with coup d'etat plotters who sought assurances the U.S. government would not betray their plans.

McClellan said that Hunt interviewed Conein in connection with leaks of the Pentagon Papers to the press, and subcommittee staff members said Colson's testimony indicated that no investigation of Conein or the CIA was involved.

Hunt's contact with the CIA in July, 1971, resulted in him obtaining equipment used in preparing for the burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, according to Cushman. Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers to the press.

Among the papers reportedly taken from the White House safe of Hunt after his arrest in the Watergate break-in were cables purporting falsely to implicate former President John F. Kennedy in the Diem assassination.

Colson, who recommended Hunt for his White House job, said on April 30 that he had known since February of this year that Hunt fabricated the cables. But he had denied any hand in the fabrication.

Associated Press