

Colson Disputes Ehrlichman Testimony

United Press International

Former presidential counsel Charles Colson yesterday disputed testimony by former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman as to how the CIA was drawn into the Watergate case and related incidents.

Colson told the Senate Appropriations' Investigations subcommittee he informed Ehrlichman that E. Howard Hunt, one of those assigned to investigate leaks of government information, wanted clearance from the CIA.

Ehrlichman in earlier testimony said he never knew about Hunt's involvement in advance, and learned about it only when CIA officials called to see if Hunt should continue to get cooperation from the agency.

Hunt, one of the convicted Watergate burglars, obtained equipment from the CIA, including disguises, which were

used in the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office and other incidents.

Colson's testimony came before the Senate panel which oversees the CIA and is investigating what if any role the agency played in the Watergate coverup and other activities.

Colson maintained that Hunt was on a legitimate White House assignment when he first made contact with the CIA. Colson hired Hunt to investigate the leaking of the Pentagon Papers, which Ellsberg released to the press.

Colson and Ehrlichman, who appeared before the committee last month, both said they did not make the call to the CIA that gave Hunt clearance. But Colson said Ehrlichman knew Hunt was seeking such approval.

"On the 7th or 8th of July, 1971, (which would have been

by phone) I told Mr. Ehrlichman that Mr. Hunt wanted to establish a liaison with the CIA as well as with other government agencies," Colson told the subcommittee. "The need for contact with the CIA was immediate in that one of Mr. Hunt's first assignments was to interview Lt. Col. Lucien Conein, who had been a principal CIA operative during the period of the Diem coup." Colson's testimony was made in executive session, and only that part pertaining to Hunt's attempt to get CIA clearance was released.

Appropriations Committee Chairman John L. McClellan said Colson's testimony completed the committee probe of CIA involvement in the case.

"Now it is our job to write a report and determine if the CIA was improperly involved," he said. "I think we have enough information to make a conclusion, but I'm not

going to make any at this point."

He said the subcommittee script to the Senate select committee investigating Watergate.