

McCord Says He Alerted C.I.A. To Scapegoat Plan in Break-In

By MAJORIE HUNTER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 22 — James McCord Jr., one of the convicted Watergate conspirators, said today that he had alerted the director of Central Intelligence last year that efforts were being made to get the agency to take the blame for the Watergate break-in.

McCord said that he issued his warning in a letter to Richard M. Helms, at that time director of the agency and now Ambassador to Iran.

The Helms letter, he said, was one of seven that he had sent to officials of the agency between July 29 of last year and Jan. 5 of this year.

"I felt that an attempt was being made to wrongfully lay the blame for Watergate on the C.I.A.," he said.

McCord spoke as he emerged from three hours of questioning by the House Armed Services subcommittee on Intelligence Operations, which is looking into the agency's in-affair.

The session was closed, but both McCord and the subcommittee chairman, Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, confirmed that McCord had discussed the letters extensively during his testimony.

That earliest letter, sent to Mr. Helms, was signed "Jim" but the others were unsigned, according to Mr. McCord.

Asked why he had not signed the others, McCord said that he "wanted to be sure" his name would not be generally known "in case the letters got out of channels."

McCord had worked as a C.I.A. agent for some 20 years before retiring several years before the Watergate break-in last June 17. At the time of the Watergate affair, he was security officer for the Republican re-election committee.

Officials of the agency had told the Nedzi subcommittee several weeks ago that letters believed to have been written by McCord had been received, but that nothing had been done about them because various persons who read them assumed "the other guy" would take some action.

McCord said today that he had mentioned the name of his former attorney, Gerald Alch, as being among those who had suggested to him that the agency shoulder the blame.



Associated Press

Charles W. Colson, former Presidential aide, in his Washington office yesterday. He said he had inquired about E. Howard Hunt Jr. after the Watergate break-in.

"I don't recall specifically if others were mentioned in the letters," he said.

McCord had testified before the Senate Watergate committee in May that Mr. Alch had suggested to him that James Schlesinger, who succeeded Mr. Helms as C.I.A. director, would "go along" with a plan to have the agency say that McCord was on its payroll at the time of the break-in.

Mr. Schlesinger later denied any knowledge of such a plan.

Representative Nedzi said that McCord told the subcommittee today that he first suspected efforts to involve the C.I.A. last summer after a conversation he had with Mrs. E. Howard Hunt Jr., wife of another Watergate conspirator.

"He was vague about what she had told him," Mr. Nedzi said, "but he said it planted a definite suspicion in his mind."

Mrs. Hunt was killed in the crash of an airplane over Chicago. She had \$10,000 in cash in her purse at the time.

The Nedzi subcommittee hopes to explore this matter further by questioning Hunt, who has been subpoenaed for questioning next Thursday. He has not appeared before any of the Congressional panels investigating the Watergate affair.

(28 JUN)