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Innocently Aided

Liddy, Colson Claims

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to President Nixon, said he knew before January, 1972, that G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt had burglarized the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Still, Colson said, he did not suspect the two of planning further illegal acts when they sought his help — and got it — in seeking approval later for what he called a security and intelligence plan for the presidential election campaign.

The plan included the Watergate operation, for which Hunt later pleaded guilty and Liddy was convicted.

Phone Call

It also included, according to testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, proposals for breaking and entering, eavesdropping and telephone tapping in an espionage campaign against the Democrats, at their Watergate office complex quarters and elsewhere.

In an interview, Colson acknowledged he telephoned deputy Nixon campaign director Jeb S. Magruder in late January or early February, 1972, and urged that Liddy and Hunt be given a

hearing on their plan.

He denied knowing or asking what their plan contained.

Colson's comments in the interview indicated that at the time he helped Liddy and Hunt he knew they previously had engaged in an il-



Charles W. Colson

—AP Photo

legal act, the Ellsberg break-in.

He said he didn't ask what their campaign plans entailed because he didn't have time.

"The meeting lasted a sum total of five minutes," he said.

Asked why, in light of their previous experience, it didn't occur to him that Hunt and Liddy might plan other illegal exploits, Colson said:

"No, I assumed whoever supervised them would make sure it was legal."

Colson, who resigned in March after four years as a special counsel to President Nixon, has been a key figure from the start in the Watergate affair because he hired Hunt as a White House consultant in 1971.

So far, however, Colson

has not been tied directly to the Watergate break-in or political espionage, and he says federal prosecutors have told him he is not a target of the Watergate grand jury investigations.

In recent weeks, Colson has strongly defended the President, insisting Nixon had no knowledge of the Watergate break-in or cover-up.

Raised Money

Hunt and Liddy reportedly directed the break-in of the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding in Los Angeles the weekend of Sept. 3-4, 1971. The break-in stemmed from a White House assignment to investigate leaking of the Pentagon papers.

Disclosure of the break-in led to dismissal of charges against Ellsberg in a Los Angeles federal court earlier this year.

In a subsequent interview, Colson said former presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman told him about the break-in two weeks after it occurred.

While he again denied that he had any prior knowledge of the break-in, he did confirm that at the request of John D. Ehrlichman he had obtained \$5000 from outside sources to finance the Hunt-Liddy investigation of Ellsberg.

He declined to name the source of the money except to say it was not from the Nixon re-election committee, then in its formative stages.