

Mitchell on Liddy Meeting:

Former Attorney General and Nixon re-election campaign manager John N. Mitchell gave his version to the Senate select Watergate committee yesterday of the key events leading up to and following the June 17, 1972, discovery of the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Following are excerpts of his testimony, beginning with the meeting on Jan. 27, 1972, when Mitchell was still Attorney General, at which Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, then a lawyer for the re-election committee, first proposed plans to obtain intelligence about the Democrats through electronic surveillance, burglaries, and spying by call girls. The meeting, at which Liddy illustrated his plans with color charts, was held in Mitchell's Justice Department office. Deputy Nixon campaign manager Jeb Stuart Magruder was also present.

Committee counsel Samuel Dash: Now the Committee has heard, Mr. Mitchell, considerable testimony about this particular meeting . . . what, to your best recollection, was the intelligence plan that Mr. Liddy presented to you as Attorney General or in your role as adviser to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President?

Mitchell: I think it can be best described as a complete horror story that involved a mish-mash of code names and lines of authority, electronic surveillance, the ability to intercept aircraft communications, the call girl bit and all the rest of it . . .

Dash: Do you recall any of the code names that were used, Mr. Mitchell?

Mitchell: No, I can't, Mr. Dash. The matter was of such striking content and concept that it was just beyond the pale.

Dash: When Liddy completed his presentation what was your reaction?

Mitchell: Well, I think it was very simple. As I recall, I told him to go burn the charts and that this was not what we were interested in. What we were interested in was a matter of information gathering and protection against the demonstrators.

Dash: Mr. Mitchell, if this was the kind of plan that you have described and, as has been described this way by other witnesses before this Committee, and since you were the Attorney General of the United States, why didn't you throw Mr. Liddy out of your office?

Mitchell: Well, I think, Mr. Dash, in hindsight I not only should have thrown him out of the office, I

should have thrown him out of the window.

(Laughter.)

Dash: Well since you did neither—

(Laughter)

—Why didn't you at least recommend that Mr. Liddy be fired from his responsible position at the Committee since obviously he was presenting to you an irresponsible program?

Mitchell: Well, in hindsight I probably should have done that, too. About the belief I had at the time in turning the matter over we would get back to the purpose that was originally intended, and that he was qualified to pursue that particular segment that we had been talking about.

Mr. Dash: Well, it's been testified that although you didn't take an affirmative action, you did not approve the plan that was presented by any means, that Mr. Liddy at least went away from your office with the idea that he could come back with a scaled down version and a version of a plan for intelligence gathering that would have a lower price tag. By the way, what was the price tag? Do you recall the price tag?

Mitchell: Oh, just a million dollars.

Dash: Now . . . obviously Mr. Magruder and Mr. Liddy (did) not get the impression that you completely disapproved of the program because they did set up only eight days later a meeting in your office on Feb. 4 with the same participants in which they presented a half-million dollar program, I understand, which included electronic surveillance.

Mitchell: Well, Mr. Dash, I would disagree with the testimony to which you refer insofar as Mr. Magruder or Mr. Liddy either one of them was invited back under the basis of the same concept with respect to the presentation of a plan, and I think former White House Counsel John Dean, if I recall his testimony, agrees a little bit more with what my recollection was and it was to the point of this was not what we were interested in. What we were interested in was the gathering of information and the security and protection against the demonstrations.

Dash: But nevertheless Mr. Magruder and Mr. Liddy did come back and Mr. Dean attended that meeting with you, on Feb. 4,

'A Complete Horror Story'