

NYTimes carries longer version of this.

Watergate Burglars' First Tries

The Other Break-Ins

Miami

New details of the initial break-in into the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate complex in Washington last year have been provided by participants in the operation to various law enforcement agencies here.

According to these participants, there were two bungled attempts to enter the Democratic headquarters before the first successful entry on May 28, 1972.

The first attempt failed because the planners of the operation did not know of the presence of security guards on the way to the Democrats' offices. The second attempt had to be called off because the supposedly expert Cuban locksmith could not open the door to the committee's headquarters.

MEMORY

The reconstruction of events in late May, 1972, based principally on the recollections of some of the participants, as told to the investigators and to the New York Times is as follows:

Shortly after noon on May 26, 1972, six Miamians — Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio R. Martinez, Virgilio R. Gonzalez, Felipe Dediego, Reinaldo Pico and Frank A. Sturgis — registered at the Watergate hotel under fictitious names.

According to a participant, the six were joined an hour later by E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy, who also signed the register with assumed names.



VIRGILIO GONZALEZ
He needed more tools

All eight had reservations made by Ameritas Inc., a Miami corporation that was supposed to hold "a convention" at the hotel. Ameritas is a real estate concern in which Barker was an executive.

DINNER

At 8 p.m., the eight men, some of whom still did not know the purpose of the gathering, met for a "convention dinner" in the Continental Room, a private room on the ground floor of the adjoining Watergate office building.

It was a pleasant meal one of the participants recalled. But after the dinner Ameritas' "president," Hunt, turned to serious business.

"You are the chosen few," a participant quoted him as telling the six Miamians. "You will have an opportunity to carry out a very im-



FRANK STURGIS
A 'convention' dinner

portant mission for the government, a mission of national security that is related to Cuba. This will be the first of a series of operations of this type and we want to know if we can count on you for other operations, too."

Hunt talked in the same vein for some 15 minutes and all present agreed to "join the action team," one participant recalled.

Hunt, who had brought with him a 16-millimeter film projector, showed the group an educational movie. Some participants were disappointed, one of them said, having expected to see a film on break-in techniques. Instead, the movie was about running a school system and tried to teach how to instill democratic ideas through proper educational methods.

The movie was run several times, apparently to occupy the time, since the first attempt to enter the Democratic National Committee offices was to be made later that night, according to one of the group.

The Continental Room had to be vacated by 2 a.m. and Hunt, with a walkie-talkie, and Gonzalez, the locksmith, with his tools, hid in two closets, one of the participants said, while the rest left the room, which was closed for the night.

The plan was for Gonzalez to open the door to a staircase leading to the committee's offices. But security guards were constantly passing and Hunt and Gonzalez had to give up the attempt, one of the group said.

CHANGE ^{27 MAY}

On the second night, the break-in tactics were changed, according to one of the participants. A frontal "assault" was reportedly begun with seven men: the six Miamians and James W. McCord Jr., who had not attended the Ameritas dinner. He was later convicted in the June 17 Watergate break-in.

As one of the participants recalled it: At about 11:30 p.m., the seven men, carrying two suitcases with bugging and photographic equipment, walked through the lobby of the Watergate building. McCord spoke briefly to two guards there who gave the group permission to enter. The seven signed an entry book and took an elevator to the eighth floor.

He said that the other six men left McCord hidden in a men's room there and walked down to the sixth floor where the Democratic offices were.

But despite many efforts, the participant recalled, Gonzalez could not open the door to the offices.

QUIT

After about 45 minutes he gave up trying and the men walked up to McCord to report the failure.

"Hunt and Liddy were furious, especially Liddy, who acted like crazy," an investigator quoted one participant as saying.

The tactics were again changed for the third attempt, to be made on Sunday night, May 28, according to a participant. In the meantime, he said, Gonzalez flew to Miami in the morning to get new, better lock picks and returned to Washington in the evening.

TWO

The third attempt was made late that night by Gonzalez, equipped with break-in tools, and by Sturgis, who was carrying a walkie-talkie, according to a participant. The two entered the office building through a garage door, he said, and walked up the stairs to the Democratic office. Gonzalez still had trouble opening the door, the participant recalled, but he finally managed to do so and Sturgis radioed to Hunt and Liddy that the entry had been made.

The other five men, again carrying bugging and photographic equipment, followed the same route to the sixth floor, the participant said.

INSTALL

After about two hours when bugs had reportedly been installed on phones and documents photographed and the men had left the building unnoticed, the team gathered in the room occupied by Hunt and Liddy for what one participant called a "victory celebration."

"Hunt and Liddy were euphoric because of our success," the participant recalled. "Hunt said that this was a job well done and that the United States would be grateful to us for it. We also were very happy. We really felt like patriots that night."

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