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Porter Pleads Guilty to Lying

Herbert L. (Bart) Porter, former White House aide, leaves court building after pleading guilty to a charge of lying to FBI during Watergate probe. Story on A8.

Porter Pleads Guilty to Lying In FBI Probe

By Timothy S. Robinson
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Herbert L. (Bart) Porter, a former White House and Nixon campaign official, pleaded guilty yesterday to a charge of lying to FBI agents who were investigating the Watergate break-in.

U. S. District Court Judge William B. Bryant delayed sentencing of the 35-year-old Porter pending a presentence report. Porter could face a jail term of five years, a fine of \$10,000 or both.

Porter would not comment after his plea, saying instead that he would make a statement about his involvement in the Watergate cover-up after he is sentenced.

Porter entered the plea to a one-count information filed against him last Monday by the Watergate Special Prosecutor's office.

Assistant Watergate Special Prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste said in court yesterday that the government could prove that Porter lied to FBI agents on July 19, 1972, concerning a conversation he had with Nixon deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder about the expenditure of \$100,000.

According to Porter's own testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, he lied to the FBI when he said the money was given to Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy for "protection" of Republican speakers against violence. In fact, the money was partially used to finance the Watergate break-in.

Meanwhile yesterday, White

House aide Stephen Bull appeared for about five hours before a federal grand jury investigating possible criminal charges in connection with Watergate tape erasures.

Bull said after his grand jury appearance that he is convinced that the tape erasure was accidental.

When asked how that accident could have occurred, Bull said, "I have no idea, but I know I did not erase it."

Bull said he considered himself an important witness before the grand jury, and would not say whether he was a target of its probe.

"I was advised of my rights, which I understand is a normal procedure," he said.

During his brief court appearance, Porter spoke only when asked by the judge about the details of his plea and whether he recognized the penalty he might face.

After Judge Bryant read the charges and asked Porter if he had any "quarrel" with the prosecutor's outline of the case against him, Porter replied:

"I plead guilty, your honor."

Porter joins a growing list of former White House and reelection committee aides who have pleaded guilty to various charges resulting from Watergate and other incidents.

The others are Magruder, John W. Dean III, Frederick C. LaRue, Egil (Bud) Krogh and Donald Segretti. Krogh and Segretti have been sentenced to six months in prison, and the others are scheduled to be sentenced when their testimony at future legal proceedings is no longer needed.

Persons familiar with the prosecution of the original Watergate case said Porter's testimony was considered critical during the early stages of the investigation.

They were reported to have been suspicious of Magruder's version that the \$100,000 to Liddy was to be used for political "dirty tricks," and were told by campaign treasurer Hugh W. Sloan Jr. that Magruder had asked him to commit perjury.

When Porter corroborated Magruder's testimony, the prosecutors decided to accept the Magruder story, these sources said.