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Editorials

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Seven More in Watergate Net

IN MARCH, 1973, James McCord Jr., a former CIA agent employed as security chief for the Committee to Re-elect the President, wrote a letter to Federal Judge John Sirica, in whose court he had been found guilty of illegally entering Democratic National headquarters. It was a two-page letter, speaking of perjury and concealed evidence and it transmuted a lunatic "third rate burglary" into a political explosion of megaton range and apparently made Watergate a name that will live in infamy.

Now, a year later, a Federal grand jury has accused seven ranking members of the White House staff, and its force and effect are inescapable. The 50-page, 13-count indictment charges conspiracy and an assortment of other offenses involving "deceit, craft, trickery and dishonest means," and is said to be the most comprehensive accusation of political wrongdoing in the nation's history. Its inclusion of the Messrs. Haldeman and Ehrlichman, the President's "trusted advisers," emphasizes its thrust.

ALONG WITH THE INDICTMENT, the grand jury sent a sealed report to the court, which is believed to contain views on the President's possible relation to all this.

It is further relevant that two former cabinet members are now on trial for conspiracy and obstruction of justice as a result of the McCord note. A score of other White House aides or Re-election Committee employees have pleaded guilty. The grand jury is expected to indict several more. The Senate's Watergate committee is exploring other avenues — or alleys — of possible illegality. The House Judiciary committee is studying the possible grounds for impeachment of the President.

The fallout from McCord's year-old letter is such that "One year of Watergate" has indeed produced enough to occupy the courts and Congress for some time to come.