

# Baker Probes Possible Ties Between CIA and Watergate

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For several months now, the Senate Watergate committee's ranking Republican, Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, has been directing a closed-door investigation into possible ties between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Watergate affair.

The most recent witness known to have testified before Baker was former CIA director Richard M. Helms, whom Baker had brought back from Tehran, where Helms is U.S. ambassador, to answer questions earlier this month. When he emerged from the closed session after three hours of taking testimony, Baker said only that Helms had been "forthcoming" as a witness.

(Appearing on the CBS program Face the Nation yesterday, Baker said he has submitted an extensive report on the question of possible CIA involvement in



HOWARD H. BAKER JR.  
... vague on findings

the Watergate coverup to the Watergate committee.

(He refused to reveal what he had found, but added that "it is not a one-line report saying we found no involvement by the CIA

... I know more than I'm at liberty to disclose at this moment." He said he has recommended to Senate Watergate Committee chairman Sam Ervin that the material be turned over to the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.)

Baker, the Senate select committee's vice chairman, has at turns been coy and reserved in discussing his investigation suggesting on the one hand in vague public statements that information yet to be revealed may dwarf what is already known about the Watergate affair but then refusing to elaborate on those statements.

"I'm just trying to get all the facts I can," Baker said recently. "I can't make anybody believe that, but it's true." Baker said he is tying up "loose ends" and that he is not "pursuing any theory" concerning the CIA.

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crashing around in the forest. I can hear them, but I can't see them."

Last Jan. 23, when the Watergate committee still was planning to hold more public hearings, Baker told his fellow committee members that might call more than a dozen witnesses to testify in closed session, including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Joint Chiefs of Staffs chairman Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, former CIA director Helms and Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward.

Kissinger and Moorer were among government officials that Baker wanted to question concerning alleged spying by the Pentagon on the National Security Council. Helms and Woodward were among other witnesses whom Baker wanted to question concerning the CIA and its possible involvement in the Watergate affair.

Despite Baker's reluctance to discuss details or the direction of his investigation, a memo from the sel, Fred Thompson, to Baker gives some indication of what Baker is pursuing.

Thompson's memo, dated Feb. 20, lists 16 items or areas where the committee staff "has made and which you have made personally (requests to the CIA) which have not been complied with."

Among the requested items are:

A "Watergate file," prepared by the CIA. Contact reports from CIA case officers who worked with convicted Watergate conspirator Eugenio Martinez, who was also a CIA operative at the time of the Watergate break-in.

Logs or notebooks of technicians or others "indicating the Jan. 21, 1972 order to destroy tapes. Any other logs, notebooks or notations indicating any other destruction or orders to destroy tapes from 1963 to date, including the Jan. 24, 1973 destruction order."

A "Mr. Edward" file the

## BAKER, From A1

One apparent result of Baker's work was the disclosure, first made on CBS News, that the CIA had destroyed a number of tape recordings at about the same time that it received a request in January, 1973, from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) to retain all records that might be related to Watergate. Baker had been looking into the tape destruction, but he denied that he was the source of this story.

As a result of the report, Rep. Lucien Nediz (D-Mich.) chairman of the House Armed Service Intelligence subcommittee, requested an explanation from the CIA and said he concluded that ICA had not destroyed any Watergate-related or presidential tape recordings during its January, 1973, housecleaning.

In addition to bringing Nedzi to the defense of the CIA, Baker's probe has clearly annoyed other senior Democrats in Congress. Sen. Stuart Symington, ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services committee, attended the closed session questioning of Helms along with Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the Watergate committee.

Although Symington said little to reporters after the session, others present said he was clearly annoyed at the line of questioning that reportedly centered on whether the CIA was involved in the Watergate break-in and whether Helms

had any advance knowledge of it.

Ervin declined afterward to say anything about the substance of the questioning, but he left the interview with a ringing endorsement of Helms. "I think Mr. Helms is above reproach in any respect for the years he was with the CIA and since he has been ambassador," Ervin told reporters. "I don't think Mr. Helms has ever done anything wrong in connection with the whole affair."

In one of his occasional statements giving the impression that he is on the verge of discovering or revealing something spectacular, Baker told the Associated Press Managing Editors convention in Orlando, Fla. last Nov. 19 that the American people may have "seen only the tip of the iceberg" concerning the Watergate affair. Invited by a reporter to explain several days later what he had

meant, Baker smiled, declined and walked away.

A month later, Baker said on ABC-TV's "Issues and Answers" that if the White House would release information concerning a "matter of grave national importance," then "some of the conduct that appears otherwise unexplainable" could be explained.

When asked during the program if he knew of any more Watergate "bombshells" still unknown to the public, Baker responded ominously, "There are animals





Associated Press

Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) speaks to reporters before appears on CBS' "Face the Nation" television program.

CIA kept on Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr., another former CIA employe, who used "Edward" as a pseudonym. And "the extent of CIA activities in Mexico in calendar year 1972."

Thompson's memo goes on to point out that CIA activities in Mexico were "the basis of the Haldeman-Ehrlichman-Helms-Walters controversy."

The issue between former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and former Presidential domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman on the one hand and Helms and deputy CIA director Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters on the other concerns whether the White House tried to use the CIA to impede the FBI's Watergate investigation or whether the White House was legitimately concerned that the FBI would expose CIA operations in Mexico.

Thompson's memo also refers to a request to the CIA concerning "any previous relationship, contact, or reference in files to Bob Woodward." Woodward, along with Carl Bernstein, has done a major portion of The Washington Post's investiga-

tive reporting on the Watergate affair.

According to Baker, he had received information from a source he declined to disclose that Woodward has agreed with Robert F. Bennett, president of the Washington public relations firm of Robert R. Mullen & Co., to be "appropriately grateful" for information linking the White House and the Nixon re-election committee to the Watergate break-in.

Woodward and Bernstein, who met with Baker on Jan. 30, said that Baker told them he had information that Woodward has agreed with Bennett to "go easy" on his company and the CIA in exchange for information.

Both reporters denied that any such agreement had been made. Bennett acknowledged in an interview that his company has in the past — though it does no longer, he said — provided cover for CIA agents abroad. But Bennett denied having told Baker or anyone else that he and Woodward had any agreement where Bennett and the Mullen company received favorable treatment.

In the interview, Bennett

supported Woodward's denial that any deal or bargain had been struck in his talks with Woodward. Bennett said he told Woodward, "If you'll be straight with me, I'll be straight with you . . . you'll be straight with me, I'll tell you everything know about the Watergate."

Bennett added, however, that he was concerned that Woodward or some other reporter might "stumble" on to the connection between the Mullen company and the CIA during the Watergate investigation. So, Bennett said, he attempted to divert Woodward and other reporters from the Mullen-CIA link by giving them other information.

"There wasn't so much of an ironclad agreement with Woodward as there was unilateral action on my part," Bennett said. "I kept opening doors for him over here," he said, gesturing with his left hand, "to keep him away from over here," he indicated with a gesture to his right.

Bennett said he had never informed Woodward of the Mullen company's dealings with the CIA.

Bennett said that he had told Baker essentially the

same thing during an interview in December. In early February, Bennett said in a later interview, he saw a copy of a report made by his CIA "case officer" or contact of an interview where Bennett described his relationship to Woodward.

When he saw the report, which Baker says he has also seen, Bennett said, he saw immediately that the case officer had misunderstood the arrangement with Woodward.

In a subsequent interview, Baker was told what Bennett had told The Washington Post. "I dispute that," Baker said. "The information I have goes beyond that."

During this interview, Baker referred to a handwritten, one-page memo that he took from his pocket. At one point, Baker showed the memo to his press aide, Ronald McMahan, but refused to show it to a Washington Post reporter. Baker said that he had prepared the memo by hand-copying a classified document. Although he referred to it periodically during the interview, Baker declined to reveal what it contained.

Another incident Baker has looked into involves Bennett,



Ervin and a mutual friend of both.

According to Bennett, last spring he was approached by the friend, a North Carolina lawyer, who asked him if he was concerned about the Senate committee hearings. Bennett said he told the lawyer he was concerned about bad publicity if called as a witness, and the lawyer offered to speak to Ervin, whom he knew, and vouch for Bennett's character.

The friend, Bennett said, told Ervin, "I've known Bob Bennett for many years, and he's an honest, upright man." Bennett said the friend told him Ervin responded, "Oh, thank you very much. Glad to know that," or something like that.

Bennett and the North Carolina lawyer agree that the lawyer knew nothing about the connection between Bennett's firm and the CIA. The lawyer said that in speaking to Ervin he did not "go beyond an expression of opinion about the character of the person."

Subsequently, Bennett said, his CIA case officer expressed concern that the hearings might "blow the cover" for an agent using Bennett's firm. Bennett said he told the case officer that that was unlikely and recounted the conversation with the North Carolina lawyer.

According to Bennett, the case officer's memo that he was later shown by Baker had the same basic facts but with a different emphasis, making the situation more "dramatic" and "purple" than it was. Bennett said the memo could be read to make it appear that "maybe we had pulled off some great coup or Bennett has the Ervin committee in its back pocket."

Ervin declined to comment on the matter through a spokesman.

Baker, refusing to disclose what the memo said, told a reporter who recounted Bennett's version, "You're way off base. That's a different sheet of music." The memo, Baker said, "on the face of it is very direct, dogmatic, and categorical."

Baker said, however, that he has no suspicions about Ervin and is "absolutely convinced that he (Ervin) did nothing untoward — absolutely and completely."

Baker said he has not talked to the North Carolina lawyer about the memo to find out his version. "It's not so important to me what happened as it is that that statement is in a file," Baker explained.

Another area Baker has explored involves charges

that the Pentagon was spying on the White House to gather information about foreign policy initiatives President Nixon was taking.

News stories first began appearing on the surreptitious passage of information from military aides in the White House to the Pentagon in January, although Baker said he learned about the incident in October. And he later acknowledged that it was the Pentagon spying he was referring to in his "animals crashing around in the forest" remark on "Issues and Answers" in December.

Among the witnesses Baker says he has interviewed are Joint Chief of Staff chairman Adm. Moorer and Rear Adm. Robert O. Welander, who was in charge of liaison between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the White House. Baker declines to discuss whatever he might have learned in these interviews.

Baker said that since first learning about the military spying in October, he had been urging the White House to reveal it because he believed that the incident would help "explain" the Watergate affair.

When the military spying story first appeared in January, there was some suspicion that Baker had played a role in leaking such information in an effort to help explain the Watergate cover-up, a suspicion Baker said he was aware of. But Baker denied that he had leaked any information for the initial story about the military spying.

In discussing his investigation, Baker bristles at questions about his motives. "I am not trying to develop a theory," he said. "I am not trying to bail out the President. I am not trying to lynch the CIA. I am not trying to lynch the President. I am not trying to bail out the CIA. I am pursuing the facts."

Despite Thompson's memo complaining about the CIA—which Baker said he sent on to CIA director William Colby—Baker asserted that "Colby has been extremely cooperative."

Attempts by a reporter to discuss Thompson's memo with Colby for the record, however, were rebuffed by the CIA.

Baker said that he has submitted a "fair-sized report" to Ervin to bring him and the committee up to date on his investigation. Baker was non-committal about whether his investigation is complete.