

KLEINDIENST TALK WITH LIDDY CITED

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He Reportedly Can't Explain
to F.B.I. His Long Silence
on Alleged Mitchell Link

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BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., March 28—Former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst has reportedly told the Federal Bureau of Investigation that he has no explanation for having withheld from Federal prosecutors for nearly a year information that would have linked John N. Mitchell's name with the five men arrested in the Watergate break-in.

According to well-placed sources, Mr. Kleindienst was recently interviewed with G. Gordon Liddy on June 17, 1972, less than 12 hours after five men carrying electronic bugging equipment were arrested in the Democratic party's Watergate offices.

Mr. Liddy is understood to have invoked the name of Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Kleindienst's predecessor who was then the chairman of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, in urging that an effort be made to release the five men then in custody.

Mr. Kleindienst has said both publicly and privately that he rebuffed Mr. Liddy's suggestion. But, the sources said, he was unable to explain to F.B.I. two weeks ago why for months he told no one else in the Justice Department of Mr. Liddy's request.

Jaworski Aide Questioned

A spokesman for Leon Jaworski, the Watergate special prosecutor, declined to comment when asked whether the F.B.I. interview with Mr. Kleindienst signaled an official concern that the former Attorney General might have withheld critical information

from the prosecutors.

One Justice Department official familiar with the original Watergate case said that earlier knowledge of the raising by Mr. Liddy of Mr. Mitchell's name on the day of the break-in would have altered the course of the original Watergate prosecution. Mr. Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr. were convicted of conspiracy with the five Watergate burglars.

In his final summation at the first Watergate trial, Earl Silbert, now the acting-United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, declared his belief before the jury that the Watergate trial had stopped with Mr. Liddy.

Mr. Kleindienst, reached at his Washington home, declined comment. Mr. Kleindienst was not among the seven former White House and Presidential campaign aides indicted this month in the Watergate cover-up.

Meeting in Maryland

The conversation at issue reportedly occurred just before noon on Saturday, June 17, when Mr. Liddy and Powell Moore, another official of the Nixon campaign, appeared at the Burning Tree Country Club in suburban Maryland where Mr. Kleindienst, then the Attorney General, was having lunch.

According to Mr. Kleindienst's testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee, Mr. Liddy reportedly explained that he had been sent by Mr. Mitchell to "report" on the unsuccessful break-in earlier that morning, and that some of those arrested "might be employed by either the White House or the Committee for the Re-Election of the President."

The Watergate cover-up indictment brought by Mr. Jaworski on March 1 alleges that earlier that day Mr. Mitchell, who was spending the weekend at the Beverly Hills Hotel here, had ordered an aide to telephone Mr. Liddy in Washington and to direct him to secure the assistance of Mr. Kleindienst "in obtaining the release of one or more of the persons arrested in connection with the Watergate break-in."