

Strachan Memos Indicate White House Knew

Haldeman Received Data On Political 'Operatives'

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WASHINGTON, July 30—The House Judiciary Committee has obtained evidence that, nontas before the Watergate break-in, White House officials, including H. R. Haldeman, were informed of Republican efforts to spy on Democratic Presidential candidates.

The evidence, a series of confidential memorandums written in 1971 and 1972 by Gordon C. Strachan to Mr. Haldeman, then the White House chief of staff, also suggests that President Nixon's top aides were made aware within two months of the June 17, 1972 break-in—and perhaps within days—of the full scope of the "Gemstone" bugging operation.

Mr. Haldeman has denied under oath having any foreknowledge of covert intelligence-gathering efforts aimed at Democratic candidates. In addition, both he and Mr. Strachan have pleaded not guilty to charges that they withheld information about the Gemstone operation from prosecutors in the months after it was disclosed in the alternate of the Watergate affair.

Muskie Was Target

The first reference to political espionage efforts on behalf of the Committee for the Re-election of the President appear in a "political matters" memorandum from Mr. Strachan, Mr. Haldeman's White House aide, dated Sept. 18, 1971.

The Judiciary Committee has obtained a number of such memos from the White House in connection with its investigation of Mr. Nixon's possible impeachment. The latest series was made public with other committee evidence last week.

Although none of the memos touch the President directly, and thus have not been instrumental in the decision to recommend his impeachment, the documents illustrate the close exercise of authority by Mr. Haldeman and the White House over virtually every facet of the re-election operation.

In the midst of a discussion of scheduling and strategy, Mr. Strachan noted, almost in passing, that "a plant will be in Muskie headquarters beginning Oct. 1." He did not elaborate.

Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine was perceived at that time by the White House as the President's strongest Democratic opponent, a status he maintained until he began to fail in his party's primary elections the following spring.

Several "operatives" were hired by the White House and the Nixon re-election committee to place Mr. Muskie under surveillance, and the memos do not make clear to which of

them Mr. Strachan was referring.

Donald H. Segretti, who was hired with Mr. Haldeman's approval as a player of political "dirty tricks," eventually "planted" a secretary in the Muskie campaign organization in Florida, but not until early 1972.

Others Involved

Another agent, Thomas Gregory, a student on leave from Brigham Young University, was later placed in Mr. Muskie's Washington headquarters by E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the convicted Watergate conspirators, but not until February, 1972, about five months after the September memo was written.

A second anti-Muskie operation inspired by Mr. Hunt involved a cab driver, hired as a courier by the Muskie campaign organization, who provided copies of documents he handled to John R. Buckley, an Office of Economic Opportunity official who was paid by Mr. Hunt.

In addition, two operatives working for the Nixon re-election committee and known as "sedan chair I" and sedan chair II" supplied the committee with information on the Muskie campaign. But as in the case of the Buckley operation, the dates of their activity remain unclear.

Whoever the "plant" was, he apparently had access to the inner recesses of the Muskie campaign organization in the fall of 1971.

Buchanan Advice Cited

In an October, 1971, Strachan-to-Haldeman memo released with the others by the Judiciary Committee last week, Mr. Strachan wrote, "The Muskie office plant is . . . producing speeches prior to delivery, recipients of Muskie materials in certain states, and films of certain files."

Mr. Strachan also displayed some apparent knowledge of the re-election committee's efforts to "sabotage" the primary campaigns of Democratic Presidential challengers, referring in the October memo to the success of "suggestions" by Patrick J. Buchanan, a Presidential speech writer, "for causing Muskie difficulties during appearances."

He concluded with an assurance to Mr. Haldeman that at that time "no other intelligence activities against any of the other Democratic contenders is being pursued."

A third memo, dated Jan. 18, 1972, reported on the continuing success of the Muskie spies and indicated that the struggl-

gate committee and elsewhere.

The first phase was the bugging of telephones and photographing of documents at the Democratic National Committee's Watergate headquarters, which the break-in team organized by Mr. Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy was doing when captured by the police on June 17, 1972.

These arrests brought Gemstone to a halt. The second phase, the electronic surveillance of Democratic party officials during their national convention in Miami the next month, was never put into effect.

Mr. Hunt and others have testified, however, that arrangements for "phase two" had been laid long before June 17, and that a memo written by Mr. Strachan to Mr. Haldeman in August, 1972, indicates that the White House had learned of, and tried to cover-up, the arrangements in the days and months following the Watergate arrests.

ing campaign of Representative John M. Ashbrook of Ohio, a conservative Republican who briefly opposed Mr. Nixon for his party's nomination, had also been infiltrated.

"Through various sources," Mr. Strachan wrote, "Ashbrook's first mailing, Muskie's plans for newspaper ads on youth on January 26th, Muskie's fund-raising mailing, minutes of Muskie's domestic issues meeting . . . have been received. These materials are attached at Tab D."

The paragraph was marked with the chief of staff's customary check, an indication to Mr. Strachan that Mr. Haldeman had read the material.

In his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee last summer, Mr. Strachan, a 30-year-old lawyer who served as Mr. Haldeman's liaison with the re-election committee, conceded that following the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in, he had destroyed, on Mr. Haldeman's orders, subsequent political memos that alluded to the Gemstone project.

The Watergate operation, allegedly approved by former Attorney General John N. Mitchell who later became the Nixon campaign director, included two distinct phases, according to testimony of some of the perpetrators before the Water-

of Spying Months Before Watergate

JULY 31, 1974

17