

# Hunt Denies 'Blackmail'

## In a Demand for Money

Washington

E. Howard Hunt Jr. testified yesterday that the money demand that former President Nixon viewed as blackmail last year was just an attempt to collect an overdue bill.

Hunt, testifying at the Watergate coverup trial, said it was neither extortion nor blackmail.

Following him on the witness stand was Jeb Magruder, who said that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell once expressed annoyance about the results of bugs and wiretaps planted at Democratic party headquarters by agents of the Nixon re-election committee.

Magruder, formerly Mitchell's deputy in the 1972 presidential campaign, said Mitchell told chief Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy "that he was dissatisfied with the product Liddy was producing from wiretaps and photographs."

Magruder said Liddy told Mitchell "he was going to correct the problem."

Asked whether the problem was corrected, Magruder replied:

"Yes. We learned on the morning of June 17 that Liddy had not corrected the problem but created a problem."

June 17, 1972, was the Saturday morning when police arrested five men in the act of burglarizing the Democratic party headquarters.

Magruder, who pleaded guilty of participating in the Watergate coverup and to helping in the planning of the burglary, was the third witness in the trial of Mitchell, John D. Ehrlichman, H. R. Haldeman, Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson. All are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice.

The boyish-looking Magruder, 39, has been in prison since June 4.

During 35 minutes of questioning before yesterday's court session ended, Magruder described the three meetings at which Liddy presented various political espionage plans to Mitchell.

Plan No. 3, Magruder said, was discussed by himself, Mitchell and another re-election committee aide, Frederick C. LaRue, at Key Biscayne, Fla., on March 30, 1972.

"Finally, Mr. Mitchell said well, let's give them the \$250,000 and see what they come up with," Magruder said.

Hunt was asked during cross-examination whether he had blackmailed the White House.

"You don't consider your comments to disclose seamy things you did unless you got \$50,000, \$60,000, \$72,000 as blackmail?" he was asked.

"No, sir," said Hunt.

"What do you consider it, an investment plan?"

"I consider that I was in the position of a bill collector trying to get those who had made prior commitments," Hunt said.

Hunt had testified that in March, 1973, when he was about to be sentenced for his role as foreman of the Watergate break-in team, he had word relayed to the White House that he wanted \$122,000 to pay his lawyers. He said he threatened to disclose other covert jobs that he had done for the White House.

The White House tape transcript of a conversation former White House counsel John W. Dean III had with Mr. Nixon on March 21 showed that both Dean and the President viewed the demand as blackmail.

"You don't feel you were

selling your silence?" William Hundley, attorney for Mitchell, asked.

"No, sir," said Hunt.

Hundley asked if Hunt considered it extortion.

"No, sir . . . it was neither extortion nor blackmail," Hunt responded.

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