

11 July 1975

Noon news

(Alan Snitow): During the Watergate scandal, many conspiracy theorists said that they thought that Watergate was a CIA plot to get rid of President Nixon. They pointed, among other things, to the fact that many of the Watergate burglars were CIA agents, or former agents, but they couldn't come up with much in the way of hard evidence. Since they were unable to link the action itself at the Watergate complex, and the White House planners, to the people who brought out the information that finally ousted Nixon.

Now there appears to be that information available. The man who revealed the existence of the White House tapes was a CIA agent in the White House. Warren van Orden has details:

(Van Orden): Alexander Butterfield was named today as a CIA contact in the White House. Retired Colonel Fletcher Prouty, who was a CIA liaison with the Joint Chiefs of Staff before he left the Army in 1963, said the Butterfield was the CIA contact in the White House in 1971. Prouty said that in 1971 he was the director of the National League of Families of Prisoners of War and had a project he wanted to discuss with a CIA contact in the White House. He said he first met with two Air Force officers who had CIA experience, and they advised him to go see Butterfield in the White House. In order to do this, Prouty said he first went to the Mullen Company, which he said was a public relations firm and a front operation for the CIA. He said that at Mullen he met Howard Hunt, who was later convicted in the Watergate breakin, and that Hunt told him he had set up Butterfield as his contact man for the prisoner of war project. Prouty said he never met directly with Butterfield, but that the White House started supporting his prisoner of war group, and that the White House asked the Advertising Council, a business-oriented producer of so-called public service media ads, to promote the group's work. In July of 1973, in testimony before the Senate committee investigating the Watergate breakin, Butterfield revealed for the first time the existence of the system which recorded President Nixon's conversations in the Oval Office and other parts of the White House, and said that he was involved in the operation of the system himself. This revelation led to repeated court battles over whether Nixon could keep his conversations secret, and as more and more of these tapes were made public, Nixon published highly edited versions of several of them, leading to increased criticism of him. In his last weeks in office, Nixon reluctantly released some tape transcripts which indicated that he had been involved much more closely in the Watergate coverup than he had admitted. And the Nixon lies revealed by those tapes were the final straws that led to Nixon's resignation almost a year ago. It appears rather unlikely that Nixon would have been forced out of office if the existence of ~~his~~ his taping system had not been made public and transcripts of the tapes released. It is also quite doubtful that these tapes would have become public knowledge if it were not for the testimony of Alexander Butterfield. The source of today's story, Col. Prouty, did not say whether Butterfield was still actively working for the CIA at the time of his testimony, but ^{during} did make it clear that he was associated with the intelligence agency ^{at} least some of the time he was working at the White House. Prouty, in describing Butterfield's role, said "He was a contact; this was not a spying job," and said that from his own experience with the CIA, he knew contact agents arranged cover operations for the agency. He said he had no personal knowledge as to whether Nixon knew of Butterfield's involvement with the the agency.

SFC, WXP, NYT 12 Jul 75 filed CIA (d);
 Later clippings will also be in same file.

Prouty also said that Alexander Haig, who was Nixon's chief of staff during his last year in office, worked for the CIA. He said Haig was his contact in 1962 and 1963 and, although he did not know whether Haig ~~worked for the CIA~~ still worked for the CIA while he was working for Nixon, he said "as an assumption that is possible." President Ford's press secretary, Ron Neesen, said today that the White House does not have any information to substantiate allegations that a member of the previous administration was any kind of ~~agent~~ an agent, and added that "to the best of our knowledge there is no employe now working at the White House who has a CIA connection of which we are unaware." He did say that a few agents do work at the White House, but that they are known and that none of them are undercover operatives. Alexander Butterfield and Alexander Haig have not commented on the reports of their involvement with the CIA, although Butterfield's wife called the reports of his role "absolutely false."

(Snitow) And Cuban Prime minister Fidel Castro said today he had no grounds, nor any way of telling, whether or not the late President John Kennedy and his brother, Robert, were directly involved in assassination attempts against him, but he said he ~~now~~ knew of plans for perhaps 40 to 60 attempts against his life by counter-revolutionary groups that were controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency. Castro told ~~reporters~~ news reporters about an attempt to poison him in 1961 with a chocolate milkshake that failed because the milkshake bottle froze.

And also, in Washington, U.S. District Judge John Sirica ruled today that Bernard Barker need not serve the remaining five months of his jail term for the original Watergate breakin. Sirica also reduced to time served the jail terms of three others in the original Watergate sentencing. Among the original team of burglars, only E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy remain behind bars. James McCord, a retired CIA security specialist and a former official of the 1972 Nixon reelection committee, was ordered released by Sirica on May 29.

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