

# Ziegler Watergate Stand: 'Nothing Further to Say'

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WASHINGTON — Once the grand jury finally indicted seven men in the Watergate break-in here, the central question seemed to be whether the trial would take place before or after the Nov. 7 election.

The trial, it was assumed, would provide some answers to a number of basic questions that the indictments had left open: Who paid the burglars? and why? and what was the connection between the burglars, their accomplices and the cash fund that President Nixon's chief moneyman, Maurice Stans, kept in his office safe?

It did not take very much preliminary legal wrangling, however, to demonstrate that there was little chance of an air-clearing trial before the election.

SHORTLY after that fact became evident, The Washington Post began an uncharacteristically pointed and active campaign to unveil as much information as it could discover about possible motives and manipulations of the Watergate Seven.

In almost daily stories quoting only "federal investigators" or "Justice Department files," The Post has drawn a picture of a massive campaign of political espionage and harassment directed from the White House and the Committee for the Re-election of the President, Richard Nixon's chief political operation.

Attributed to this conspiracy by the Post — and in recent days by The New York Times and Time magazine — have been a series of incidents that range from felonies such as the Watergate burglary to relative hi-jinks such as the ordering of funds in the amount of dollars worth of liquor and pizza and sending it COD to an Edmund Muskie fund-raiser here.

THE WHITE House, for which the stories cause several kinds of discomfort, began by coyly not commenting at all beyond the President's post-Watergate statement that "no one presently employed" was involved. Nixon said that was based on an internal investigation by aide John Dean.

In recent days, however, stories have begun to charge direct involvement by close Nixon aides.

One major White House discomfort comes from the obvious fact that The Post — and, now, possibly, The New York Times and Time magazine — have developed talkative sources inside the Justice Department, which is the President's official law firm.

## Once-Dry Wells Are Fountains

UNDER JOHN Mitchell, the Justice Department was a virtual dry well for "inside" information. And the Justice Department's investigative arm, the FBI, under J. Edgar Hoover, was an informationally dry well in an endless desert.

In recent days, however, all three of the news organizations have attributed spy stories to "Justice Department files" or "federal investigators."

The fact that the sources of the stories are not, specifically, revealed has, in part, encouraged the White House not to respond to individual charges on the basis that the charges are based on "hearsay" and unreliable sources.

THUS the development of the whole broad spy episode has revolved around revelations by The Post, The Times and Time magazine, with the White House refusing to respond while the rest of the press corps dashes around trying to find leaks and pick up the pieces.

The operation was broadly outlined in a starting Oct. 10 story in The Post which began: "FBI agents have established that the Watergate bugging incident stemmed from a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage conducted on behalf of President Nixon's reelection, as charged by officials of the White House and the Committee for the Re-election of the President."

"The activities, according to information in FBI and Department of Justice files, were aimed at all the major Democratic presidential contenders — and since 1971 — represented a basic strategy of the Nixon reelection effort."

WITHOUT ANY deeper attribution, The Post story said the undercover operation included following members of Democratic candidates' families and assembling dossiers

## BACKGROUND REPORT

on their personal lives; forging letters and distributing them under the candidates' letterheads; leaking false and manufactured items to the press; seizing confidential campaign files, etc.

### 'Canuck Letter' Tied to Clawson

Specifically, The Post said: Post reporter Marilyn Berger was told by Ken W. Clawson, a former Post reporter now on the Nixon staff, that he wrote the "canuck" letter that caused serious

difficulties for Edmund Muskie's campaign. Clawson denies telling her that and said, "I know nothing about it."

Three attorneys, including an assistant attorney general of Tennessee, were approached by Donald H. Segretti of California about becoming undercover agents on Nixon's behalf, working through a White House operation called "offensive security."

The FBI's investigation of the Watergate established that all the acts were financed from the secret \$350,000-700,000 cash fund kept by Stans.

That morning, at the regular White House briefing, Nixon's press secretary Ronald Ziegler was asked about the report. From the White House transcript, here are the pertinent questions and Ziegler's answers:

Q — Ron, is the President concerned that people working on behalf of his reelection appear to be engaged in widespread political sabotage?

A — I think that you are referring to the story this morning in the local paper. My response is that that has already been responded to by the Reelect Committee and by one of the individuals referred to in the story.

Q — Did the President's investigation of the problem surrounding the Watergate turn up the fact that some of the people on his staff had been engaging in political sabotage?

A — You state as a fact a story that was written but later denied by the Reelect Committee.

Q — Ron, in his comments on John Dean's investigation, the President never did touch on the political espionage or sabotage thing that was raised by Bob's question. Can you go into that at all, that aspect? The question was: Did John Dean's investigation turn up any of this?

A — I don't have any further comment on the subject.

Q — Do I understand that you are flatly denying the story in The Post this morning?

A — I referred to the fact that the Reelect Committee has issued a statement on it. The story also had a quotation from an individual who was mentioned in that. I just have nothing to add to that.

Q — Is the President personally concerned about the effect that these reports might have on his reelection efforts?

A — I have no further comment or assessment to make on the story.

### Nothing to Add, Ziegler Asserts

Sen. McGovern has made the point... that if this had happened within his election campaign, he would be held personally accountable for that. Is the President not personally accountable

for things that happen within the re-election committee?

A — I just have nothing further to say on this story.

Q — For what reason?

A — I just have nothing further to say.

Q — Do you mean that the President will have nothing to say about the specter of a person working in the White House implicated in that kind of story?

A — I have nothing further to say to you about the story that ran. I have already referred you to the comments that were included in the story as published.

Q — Can you tell us why the White House will not comment on this?

A — Simply because I have nothing more to add than what has already been said.

Five days later, The Post brought the espionage operation even closer to the White House with a story that said that Howard Hunt, a former White House consultant, indicted in the Watergate case, and Dwight L. Chapin, Nixon's appointments secretary, were Segretti's Washington contacts. The Post based its story on an affidavit from Lawrence Young, a liberal Democratic attorney and former classmate of Segretti. Young swore that Segretti told him that GOP officials had briefed him (Segretti) on what to say to the grand jury during the Watergate investigation.

The same day, The New York Times said that Segretti, according to "federal sources," was hired as an agent by Chapin and by Gordon Strachan, a White House staff assistant, and was paid through Herbert W. Kalmbach, Nixon's personal attorney in California.

Segretti, The Times said, was paid more than \$35,000 from the secret Stans fund.

THE TIMES, on Oct. 18, added that telephone records show that Segretti's telephone and credit card were used to place at least 28 calls to Chapin and Hunt at their homes.

Again, the reporters were pressing Ziegler for comment. On Oct. 16, the morning briefing contained these exchanges:

Q — Ron, did Dwight Chapin hire Segretti to do political sabotage?

A — Gene, I think if you read The Washington Post story already, Mr. Chapin has made a comment on that and I don't have anything to add to it.

### Justice Files Are Hearsay?

Q — Is the President concerned by this report and the stories?

A — I think I would say that the President is concerned about the techniques being applied by the opposition in the stories themselves. I would say his concern goes to the fact that the stories are being run that are based on hearsay, innuendo, guilt by association. He is concerned, I believe, about the fact that this sort of thing is taking place.

Q — Do you consider Justice Department files as hearsay and unsubstantiated sources?

A — I think that any story that has been written on this matter refers to sources, sources who have not revealed themselves.

Q — He said Justice Department files, not sources. Now, would you answer the question?

A — I will answer that question. The information in any story that I have seen and read, including the one in Time magazine, does not offer substantiation to the charges that we put forth.

Q — Well, are you denying the charges?

A — I am not going to make —

Q — Why won't you deny the charges? That is just a simple question before the White House?

A — My answer to the simple question, as you said, before the White House, has been given. I am not going to

dignify these types of stories with a comment.

Q — You won't say whether he has been employed by the White House?

A — If you want a comment, you can ask the question various ways. I am saying to you that I am not going to dignify stories that are based on sources and hearsay with a comment from the White House. And if you would like, you can write that I said that 29 times, because I am going to say it every time you ask me a question about one of those stories.

Q — Ron, if these charges are as nearly baseless as you say they are, and if the President does indeed have this confidence in his staff that you say he has, then why not simply lay these charges to rest as best you can, as the President's spokesman, by issuing at least a clear-cut statement and not all of these ambiguities that we keep getting. Why not a denial?

A — Here is a clear-cut statement that applies to all of your questions about stories based upon hearsay and sourced evidence. I will not dignify with comments stories based on hearsay, character assassination, innuendo, guilt by association. I will not dignify such stories with a comment. That is the White House position. That is my position.

### Baldwin Called The Weak Link

The Post also revealed, through a deposition apparently leaked to the newspaper by Democratic lawyers in the Watergate civil suit, details of the Watergate operation and a related effort to spy on George McGovern's campaign headquarters.

Former FBI agent and CRP security guard Alfred Carlton Baldwin apparently was the weak link in the Watergate bugging. According to the statement attributed to him, he monitored the recording device planted in the Democratic headquarters, having been hired by Hunt and by G. Gordon Liddy, another former White House aide who was indicted in the Watergate matter.

BALDWIN was not indicted, indicating that he was helpful in the investigation. Baldwin escaped the Watergate area when police caught the five men inside. He had been manning the listening post at the Howard Johnson's motel across the street and saw the arrests being made. He apparently was traced by investigators because he made a phone call from the motel to his home, and motel records showed the call.

Baldwin's testimony did not tie the operation to the White House but tied it directly to former White House aide Liddy and to Hunt, who at the time of the Watergate arrests still had an office at the White House.

At the Oct. 18 briefing, Ziegler finally made what was in part a "positive denial" of the accusations — but it was not clear cut.

The pertinent parts of that briefing's transcript:

ZIEGLER: We have made it absolutely clear that there was no involvement in any way in the Watergate case. The investigations have shown that. We have also, as I said, responded to source stories and hearsay stories. My comments in regard to those stories I have given you; that is no one directed at any time activity of sabotage, spying, surveillance on individuals, compiling dossiers on individuals. Now, I also stand by the position that I stated two days ago: that I am not going to comment further on stories that are based on sources that will not reveal themselves or stories based on hearsay third- and fourth-hand removed.

Q — What is the basis of your statement today?

A — I assert this as a White House position.

Q — I know, but we are asking you why you are making it, on what basis are you making this assertion, Ron?

A — Awareness of the individuals on my staff and what is condoned and tolerated from here.

Q — In other words, you are saying it is an act of faith on your part, knowing these people, that they could not have done such a thing?

A — It is a statement of confidence.

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