

Hunt Told Associates of Orders to Kill Jack Anderson

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E. Howard Hunt Jr. told associates after the Watergate break-in that he was ordered in December, 1971, or January, 1972, to assassinate syndicated columnist Jack Anderson, according to reliable sources.

According to the sources, Hunt told his former CIA associates that the order was canceled at the last minute—but only after a plan had been devised to make Anderson's death appear accidental.

His alleged plan involved the use of a poison to be obtained from a former

CIA physician, said the sources, who added that the poison was a variety that would leave no trace during a routine medical examination or autopsy.

Hunt told the sources Anderson was to be assassinated because he was publishing sensitive national security information in his daily newspaper column, based on top secret documents that were coming into Anderson's possession.

Hunt, a retired CIA agent, pleaded guilty in 1973 to charges stemming from the Watergate break-in in which he participated. He is now serving a prison term in Florida. Hunt said through his lawyer that he would have

no comment on the allegation that he planned to assassinate Anderson.

Hunt told associates after the Watergate arrests in June, 1972, that the order to assassinate Anderson came from a senior official in the Nixon White House. The sources added, however, that Hunt has told contradictory stories. To one source he said the order came directly from the senior official. To another he said that an intermediary relayed the instructions of the senior official.

Planning for the assassination extended over several days, the sources said, and went forward in sufficient detail to be one of two incidents that

Hunt confidentially revealed to former CIA associates after the Watergate break-in. He told the associates he feared that an investigation of the break-in would lead to disclosure of the assassination plan and the burglary of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office.

The identity of the former CIA doctor and the reason the assassination was called off could not be determined.

Hunt and others broke into the Los Angeles office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist in 1971, seeking information on the Pentagon Papers defendant. The illegal entry was publicly revealed in mid-1973.

The aborted Anderson assassination plot, however, has never been previously revealed. Neither the Senate nor House committees now investigating the CIA are aware of the alleged plot, according to staff members.

Other sources intimately familiar with the Watergate investigations expressed surprise that such a plan could have been kept secret for so long. For example, Charles W. Colson, the former White House special counsel who recruited Hunt for White House work, said yesterday that he had never heard of the plan.

Anderson could not be reached for comment yesterday but told UPI early

today he found an assassination plot "hard to believe."

Anderson told UPI he knew that top White House aide H.R. Haldeman had ordered the Justice Department to investigate him in an effort to find "some crime that they could attack me with" and that a raid on his office was once discussed at the department.

"But I have absolutely no reason to believe that Haldeman would order my assassination," Anderson told UPI.

The alleged Anderson assassination plan has no connection to a previously reported incident in which Watergate

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Howard Hunt Tied to Jack Anderson Assassination Plot

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conspirator G. Gordon Liddy apparently thought he had been ordered to kill Anderson.

The Liddy incident, according to testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee, was triggered by a chance remark by former President Nixon's deputy campaign director, Jeb Stuart Magruder, who expressed a desire to "get rid" of Anderson. Liddy apparently took him literally but Magruder soon made it clear that he was not serious, according to Watergate testimony.

By all available accounts, the Liddy incident was never followed by any actual steps to plan the assassination of Anderson.

William A. Snyder, Hunt's attorney, said he spoke to Hunt Friday about the alleged Anderson plot and that neither he nor his client would have any comment.

A source close to Hunt said that Hunt and his attorney were worried that public disclosure of the aborted assassination plot might lead to another investigation.

Referring to acting U. S. Attorney Earl Silbert, who headed the first Watergate investigation, the source said: "You've got Earl Silbert sitting there and Howard (Hunt) heads his staff. . . . What a zealot can do with the conspiracy law is amazing even if nothing was done."

Silbert claimed it was in part Hunt's refusal to cooperate with the first Watergate investigation that prevented Silbert from uncovering the full extent of the Watergate conspiracy.

As U. S. attorney, Silbert has the power to open an investigation into allegations of criminal conduct.

Anderson was frequently a target of White House efforts to discredit him and to locate his sources, according to information made public during the various Watergate investigations.

W. Donald Stewart, a former top Pentagon investigator, said in a series of recent interviews that none of the Watergate-related investigations publicly revealed the true extent to which Anderson was a thorn in the side of the Nixon administration.

In the course of numerous investigations of Anderson columns during 1971-72, Stewart said he was given "every resource in the book" to locate the source of the leaks. He said he identified nearly 60 classified documents to which Anderson had access.

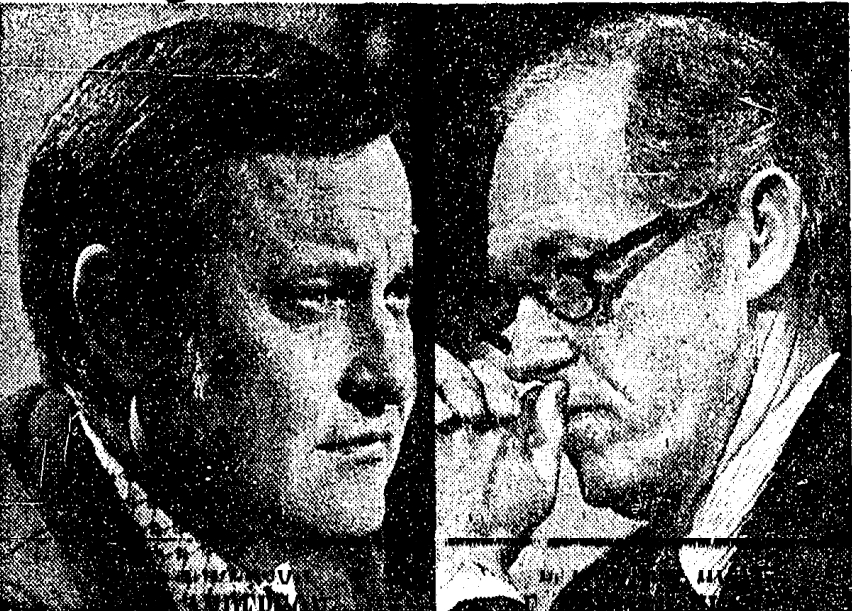
At one point Stewart said he wanted to obtain a search warrant to go through Anderson's office but his superiors would not approve such a request.

One investigation of Anderson cost more than \$100,000, Stewart estimated. It included development of an elaborate contingency plan in case a suspected leaker of information to Anderson fled the country.

Perhaps Anderson's best-known leak in 1971 was the highly classified information that President Nixon secretly favored Pakistan in the India-Pakistan war while the administration publicly proclaimed neutrality.

In one of the leaked documents, Henry A. Kissinger, then the president's national security adviser, was quoted as saying: "I am getting hell every half hour from the President that we are not being tough enough on India. . . . He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan."

Investigation of that leak led to exposure of a purported covert attempt



JACK ANDERSON, agent in alleged White House leak

by military liaison personnel in the White House to obtain Kissinger's sensitive papers for senior Pentagon officers.

In the course of that probe, it was revealed that Navy yeoman Charles Radford, an assistant to the Pentagon liaison officer on Kissinger's staff, knew Anderson and was the suspected leaker.

The investigation of Radford was jointly conducted by Stewart in the Pentagon and White House aide David Young who headed the so-called "plumbers" unit in charge of investigating news leaks.

Hunt and Liddy were members of the "plumbers" unit in 1971, although

Washington by J. Fred Buzhardt, then general counsel to the Defense Department, and the man to whom Stewart reported on the leak investigations.

Upon returning to Washington, Stewart said, he was met at the airport and taken to the Pentagon. There Buzhardt told him they had to find out immediately if Radford knew about the then-secret peace negotiations.

Included in the secret negotiations were 13 trips to Paris by Kissinger to meet with Communist leaders and a 1971 trip by Kissinger's deputy Alexander M. Haig, Jr., to meet with South Vietnamese President Thieu.

Stewart said that he and Buzhardt in several days established that Radford knew the details of the secret negotiations.

This caused a storm in the Pentagon and White House, Stewart said. "They were afraid that Jack Anderson was going to scoop them," Stewart said.

Several weeks later—January 25, 1972—President Nixon unexpectedly revealed the Kissinger trips and unveiled the administration's peace plan. Included was agreement by President Thieu and his vice president to resign from office while new South Vietnamese elections were held.

This was made public in a dramatic speech by Mr. Nixon on national television. In speaking of the 30 months of secret negotiations, the President said: "There was never a leak, because we were determined not to jeopardize the secret negotiations."

At the time many government officials were unable to say with authority

why Mr. Nixon revealed the plan. White House officials said it was in large part an attempt to trigger a response by Hanoi.

Stewart and another source who previously held a high post in the Nixon administration said the fear that Anderson might break the story prompted the President's speech.

During the period 1971-72 numerous sources said the President and Kissinger voiced strong feelings about Anderson and claimed he was a serious threat to the national security and their efforts to end the Vietnam war.

"It was very, very serious," one source said, "and it is hard to capture the atmosphere (during those times) but everything was at stake—ending the war, national security and even the President's re-election. All these things hung on stopping the leaks."

Stewart said in the recent interviews that he was not aware of any retaliatory action ever having been mentioned or contemplated against Anderson.

There is no evidence whatsoever suggesting that the President or Kissinger had any involvement in any plan to assassinate Anderson, but sources intimately involved in national security affairs during the period said that an atmosphere of crisis was created.

"Lots of other things were done in the name of national security," a former senior official said, "and some zealot down the line might have thought assassination would solve the problem."