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Week-1 Lab Assignment - Safe Assign

The Watergate scandal was a collection of connected political scandals that occurred during the presidency of Richard M. Nixon in the United States. The controversy comprised the June 17, 1972, break-in at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) building in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C., and the ensuing cover-up by individuals connected to or employed by the White House, as well as by Nixon.

Five intruders were taken into custody by the police; they were later identified as Virgilio Gonzalez, Bernard Barker, James McCord, Eugenio Martinez, and Frank Sturgis. They were accused of attempting to break in and intercepting calls and other communications.

Federal investigations into the break-in and journalism work by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the Washington Post were used to reveal the White House's participation. It was later revealed that Woodward and Bernstein were tipped off by CIA agent Mark Felt.

President Nixon's re-election committee, the Committee to Reelect the President (CRP), was behind the incident. They commissioned Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy to prepare the event. Interestingly, Hunt was a former CIA and Liddy was a former FBI agent!

The whitehouse subsequently attempted to obstruct the investigations, used the CIA to hinder the FBI and also paid hush money to one or more of the conspirators.

Interestingly, Nixon won in 1973 elections, even as the investigation was in progress. A senate committee was formed to investigate the happenings. After a series of attempted obstructions by the president himself, the committee concluded President Nixon could be impeached. Nixon resigned without waiting for the proceedings, however, the next President Gerald Ford pardoned him for any wrongdoings and he was not prosecuted.

This was a watershed moment in American history, with the until then high trust society divided and losing trust on their premium investigative agencies CIA and FBI as well as the Federal executive. It also was the precursor to the suffixing of ‘-Gate’ to any scandal that came up in the subsequent years/decades, thus enriching the English language!

References:

Perlstein, R. (2022) Watergate scandal in United States History, Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Watergate-Scandal>