

Bernard Leon Barker Biography

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Biography

Bernard Leon Barker was one of five men arrested in 1972 for the burglary of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C. The arrests of the burglars set off criminal, congressional and journalistic investigations that led to the conviction of a number of President Richard M. Nixon's closest aides and to Nixon's resignation in August of 1974.

Barker was born on March 17, 1917, in Havana, Cuba, the son of a U.S. citizen. He immigrated to the United States in 1933 and acquired dual citizenship before returning to Cuba several years later to attend the University of Havana. He left college in 1942 and joined the U.S. Army, serving in Europe during World War II as a bombardier. He attained the rank of captain before leaving the army and returning to Cuba. Barker joined the National Police and worked as an assistant to the chief of police. At the same time, he was recruited by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and began to work for them. Later, he transferred to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). After Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, Barker moved to Miami, Florida.

In 1971, CIA agent E. Howard Hunt recruited Barker to perform operations on behalf of the White House unit known as the "plumbers." The plumbers used covert means to break into offices and look for political intelligence. Barker and four other operatives were arrested at the Watergate on June 17, 1972. They refused to disclose who had sent them to commit the burglary and were convicted of the crime in 1973. Barker was sentenced to prison. He did discuss his role at the Senate Watergate hearings in the summer of 1973, claiming he thought the break in would lead to the liberation of Cuba.