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~~Walters, VERNON~~
See 4.01.2 Silent Missions
(orig under Walters)

Gen. Walters:

Secret Missions

All Accomplished

By **FREDERICK BURGER**

Herald Staff Writer

PALM BEACH — He does not even have a high school diploma, but the man who served as deputy director of the CIA during the turbulent Watergate years rose to power as a three-star general by interpreting eight languages for his Army superiors and three presidents.

Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Vernon Walters, now living in Palm Beach, spent his career arranging secret conferences between world powers. He set up peace talks between the U.S. and North Vietnam and, finally, late in his career, underwent the scrutiny of the Watergate investigation.

It is the last episode that brought him notoriety and mention of it brings a determined set to his face.

"I'm not willing to give just a Watergate interview," he snaps.

WALTERS, who was deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency from May 1972 to his retirement in July 1976, had something else to discuss: *Silent Missions*, his \$12.95 autobiography, to be published March 24 by Doubleday.

His 654-page book focuses on his 35-year military career and how he used his fluency in eight languages to interpret for Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon.

"They knew I had this (language) capability, and they just sought me out," said Walters, who stands an imposing 6-foot 3-inches and weighs a hefty 220 pounds. "I don't think a president ever has an official interpreter. I guess I interpret-

ed hundreds of conversations for presidents, mostly Eisenhower."

Born in New York City, Walters was six when he moved with his parents to London, where his father worked as office manager of an insurance company. He attended school in France and England and began to develop his talent for language and an interest in history. While in Europe, he also began a lifelong habit of keeping diaries. His book is culled partially from these. He returned to this country when he was 16 and had to quit school to help his financially-strapped family.

"I don't feature this in headlines," he said, "but you're probably looking at the only general in the Army without a high school diploma."

WALTERS enlisted in 1941 and served mostly in non-combat roles, watching history being made as he interpreted secret conversations for his superiors.

He was military attaché in Paris when he helped arrange secret peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam. He writes that Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's chief negotiator, once urged the United States, through Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to assassinate Nguyen Van Thieu, the president of South Vietnam and an American ally.

Kissinger refused any American involvement. Duc Tho and Kissinger later shared the 1972 Nobel Peace Prize.

"I would hope *Silent Missions* would sell well," said Walters, who lives on his \$37,500 military retirement pay, according to Pentagon

spokesmen. "I was not really an actor. I was an observer of the deeds of other people. I've held every job in the United States Army, from private to three-star general, and that's something you can't complain about.

"I'm trying to convey how much fun I've had, and, at the same time, contribute to things I believe in."

ONE OF THE things he believes in most passionately is the need for a strong intelligence apparatus in the United States. And one of the topics he dodges as much as possible is CIA involvement in Watergate. Even in his book, he devotes just 67 pages to the subject that brought his name to the forefront of national attention.

Even now, he maintains the CIA was "absolutely not" involved in the Watergate burglary, nor did it monitor the scheme's planning stages, in spite of the fact that most of the Watergate burglars had worked for the CIA at some time.

"The CIA's business isn't to go find Howard Hunts or people in the Watergate," Walters maintains. "Its business is to find out what the Soviets are developing, what their intentions are, what the deployment of their forces are. The setting up of some kind of domestic White House intelligence apparatus in no way threatened the CIA, since the CIA basically is not in that business."

Walters' name surfaced in the Watergate affair when it was learned that John Dean asked him to ask the FBI to halt its investigation of the burglary as it might relate to Mexico, since such a probe might reveal CIA activities.

"I was involved and investigated in every possible way," Walters said. "I think the fact that I remained in office speaks for itself. It

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was a highly hysterical, witch-hunting atmosphere. I had a highly rewarding life, and I was determined to stay through the storm. Nobody laid a hand on me."

A BACHELOR, Walters settled in Florida after vacationing here with his mother in the late '50s. He owned a Palm Beach condominium for six years before he retired. He kept a picture of the beach as seen from his condo window in his CIA office. "When people asked what it was, I told them that's what's waiting for me if anybody squeezes too hard. I was ready to resign that job anytime."

Heavier now than before he retired, Walters nonetheless devotes a lot of time to boating, bicycling and swimming. His sister and brother-in-law also live in Palm Beach. Rather than fiddle with the social scene, Walters says he prefers to spend his time writing.

A second book, a novel entitled *Sunset at Saigon*, is about to be sent to his publisher. He has written four chapters of a third, *The Mighty and The Meek*, and he already has a title (*Project Guilt*) for a fourth.

"I was lucky to have an extraordinary and adventurous career, and I want to share it," he said with relish. "Just as I wielded that sword, I'm wielding the pen."