

Nixon's Frequent Talks With Dean

Washington

Citing secret grand jury testimony, a confidential House Judiciary Committee staff memorandum suggested that President Nixon began meeting regularly with then-White House counsel John W. Dean III in February, 1973, to give Dean an excuse to claim executive privilege and refuse to testify before the grand jury and the Senate Watergate committee.

That testimony and other evidence that Mr. Nixon participated in the Watergate coverup is analyzed in the memo.

The evidence the memo cites also tends to support Dean's contention that Mr. Nixon knew about the Watergate coverup before March 21, when the President says it was first brought to his attention (by Dean).

A copy of the memo, dated May 24, 1974, was secured yesterday by the Los Angeles Times, which earlier had secured copies of three others by the same judiciary committee staff attorney. The memos were written at the request of several Democrats on the committee to help them coordinate and analyze the voluminous evidence that has been presented in closed hearings.

William P. Dixon, who wrote the memos, included a cover letter with the May 4 document cautioning that, "This memo is interpreta-

tive on my part and the facts presented herein may be interpreted differently by others."

The May 24 memo notes that in the year prior to Feb. 27, 1973, Dean met with the President for a total of no more than two hours — mostly on ceremonial occasions.

Mrs. Nixon did not begin meeting regularly with Dean, according to the memo, until after Dean expressed concern that he probably would be called as a witness before the Senate committee and that he had no basis for claiming executive privilege because he had not been conversing directly with the President about Watergate.

The President called Dean to meet personally with him on Watergate on February 27, according to the memo, and met with him almost daily thereafter.

"Within four days the President was able to state at a March 2 press conference that Dean could not testify before a congressional committee because of executive privilege," the memo continues.

"Less than two weeks after that, the President told a press conference that Dean could not testify before the congress because of a 'double privilege, the lawyer-client relationship, as well as the presidential (executive) privilege.'"

Los Angeles Times