

g Case: eryone

For Himself

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WASHINGTON. — With a push from the President, the Watergate swung open last week and a torrent of new allegations poured forth, implicating some of the men once closest to Richard Nixon.

"I condemn any attempts to cover up in this case, no matter who is involved," declared Mr. Nixon, abruptly making "inoperative" 10 long months of White House denials about the bugging of Democrats last year.

As a Federal grand jury closed in, the Nixon men began a retreat, falling back from earlier flat denials of any knowledge to new stories, each one tending to incriminate others while absolving the teller.

These new accounts, as they surfaced in the press, conflicted not only with each other but, often, with earlier sworn statements given by the men now trying to save themselves. Speculation followed that several high

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in Advance—Gallup Poll—Page 5-A

officials, even if not charged with actual participation in the Watergate bugging, could eventually be indicted for perjury and obstructing justice, both felonies.

It was a decision by former high Nixon campaign aide Jeb Stuart Magruder to start "spilling" to authorities that seemed to touch off the President's dramatic announcement of "major developments" and the flight for cover that followed.

But if Magruder's recantation of previous denials was a surprise to this reeling city, the revamped stories of John Mitchell and John W. Dean 3d were shocking.

Mitchell and Dean, the former directly, the latter through friends, laid out new versions for themselves through conversations with reporters.

There were inevitable contradictions for both former Attorney General Mitchell and White House counsel Dean.

Plans for illegal bugging, Magruder reportedly has told authorities, were shaped and ratified at a meeting in February 1972, attended by himself, Mitchell, Dean and G. Gordon Liddy, convicted leader of the Watergate operatives.

Mitchell at the time, was still the nation's top law enforcement officer, and the meeting was held in his Justice Department office.

The new Magruder version offers direct support to statements by convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr., who said Liddy told him of the February meeting.

In the glare of the accusing testimony of Magruder and McCord, Mitchell and Dean moved quickly to protect themselves.

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Bugging Case: It's Everyone's Business

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Both let it be known that they had indeed attended meetings where illegal bugging was proposed — and both claimed they had rejected the idea.

"No such operations were ever approved by me under any circumstances," Mitchell said Friday after going before the grand jury to deny under oath any advance knowledge of the Watergate affair.

Serious questions persisted, however, despite the denials.

Although Dean now apparently concedes he sat in on the February meeting when bugging plans were outlined, it was he who conducted the White House investigation which led Mr. Nixon to declare last August that no one then on his staff was involved in Watergate.

If Dean had listened to suggestions for illegal surveillance — even though rejecting them — why didn't he tell the President or disqualify himself from the probe?

Dean, who took the remarkable step of bolting White House channels last week to warn publicly that he will not be a "scapegoat," is now reportedly saying his investigation was doctored by higher-ups to prevent Mr. Nixon from learning the truth.

According to associates, Dean is ready to implicate



JOHN DEAN
... alters recollection

others "above and below" himself, if necessary.

Mitchell, meanwhile, was now admitting he knew about bugging plans, even though he had, from the beginning, always deliberately created the impression he did not.

Last fall, while giving a deposition in a civil suit growing out of the Watergate bugging, Mitchell was asked, "was there any discussion at which you were present or about which you heard when you were campaign director concerning having any form of surveillance on the Democratic national headquarters?"

He replied, "No, I can't imagine a less productive activity than that."

At the time of the meetings



JEB MAGRUDER
... opens floodgates

which Mitchell acknowledged Friday, he was still attorney general and had not yet resigned to run the Nixon campaign.

If Mitchell knew someone was thinking about bugging the Democrats, and then he heard about the Watergate bugging and burglary, why didn't he come forward voluntarily with everything he knew?

Magruder at the Watergate trial last January, had appeared calm and confident as he replied, "no," when asked if he gave orders to bug Democratic national headquarters and the campaign offices of Sen. George McGovern.

"We were very concerned about being sure that the activities of our (Nixon campaign) committee were handled in a legal and ethical manner," he said.

On Friday, Magruder, tense and worried-looking, wandered through noon-day crowds in downtown Washington, a newspaper with banner Watergate headlines folded under his arm. His lips trembled when he dodged a reporter's question.

Three months after the trial, with the grand jury be-

ginning to make him a target of its continuing Watergate investigation, Magruder was giving new answers to prosecutors.

He was now reportedly telling about the February meeting.

According to the Los Angeles Times, Magruder had acknowledged last year to the grand jury that he was at the meeting but claimed under oath the discussion was about how to comply with various Federal election laws.

In his new spirit of coopera-

tion, Magruder also reportedly said Mitchell and Dean arranged for hush money to keep the seven men already convicted in the Watergate case from telling what they know.

Asked Friday whether he was ever involved in such payments. Mitchell

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