

'Dean Report' Came From Ehrlichman

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By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon did not talk with John W. Dean III before declaring last Aug. 29 that an investigation by Dean showed that no one then on the White House staff was involved in the Watergate scandal.

In making that disclosure yesterday, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that the President ordered the investigation through "senior" aides and received Dean's report orally in the same way.

Other sources confirmed a New York Times report that the information regarding the investigation—an investigation Dean said he never made—was given to the President by former aide John D. Ehrlichman, whose resignation Mr. Nixon accepted April 30. Dean was fired the same day.

Dean said in interviews over the weekend that he

was "flabbergasted" when he heard the President say in his Aug. 29 press conference that on the basis of a Dean investigation he could say categorically that no one then on the staff was involved in Watergate.

In those interviews, Dean said that he never produced the report which Mr. Nixon mentioned and had not had any word about it from the President before the press conference.

Ziegler said yesterday that in the months that followed the Aug. 29 press conference he himself had many conversations with Dean about the investigation and never heard him say he had not made one.

"There was no question in any of our minds that an appropriate investigation had been undertaken," the press secretary said, adding that

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Dean "was clearly in charge" of it.

All the subsequent statements that the President and the press secretary made denying White House involvement resulted from the work of Dean and his staff, Ziegler asserted.

In the months after Aug. 29, when reporters asked Ziegler whether the report was written or oral, he declined to answer specifically until yesterday, when he said it was oral and transmitted to the President through a "senior" staff member, meaning Ehrlichman.

In meetings with reporters prior to his resignation, Ehrlichman repeatedly denied any knowledge of the Watergate affair. In an interview with the Chicago Tribune published April 2, Ehrlichman dismissed the

reports of a scandal as "a lot of charges and no evidence."

In the same interview, Ehrlichman said he had no reason to doubt Dean's "veracity, probity or integrity."

Ziegler insisted in a lengthy and often strained exchange with reporters yesterday that, while there was no written report, the investigation did go on "at the direction of the President" working through senior staff members.

The responsibility for the investigation was "clearly" Dean's, Ziegler said, and there was "never any question that indeed an investigation had taken place."

Ehrlichman was not the only one who made reports to the President regarding the investigation, Ziegler said.

"I'm sure Mr. Ehrlichman did have discussions with the President, but I cannot say he was the only senior staff member that discussed the matter with the Presi-

dent," he said.

Asked if the President had ever asked former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and Ehrlichman what their roles were in the investigation, Ziegler said that was the kind of question he could not answer.

"Did Dean ever tell you he was flabbergasted by the President's statement?" Ziegler was asked.

"No," he replied.

"Were you ever told by Dean an investigation was made?" another reporter asked.

"Yes," Ziegler replied, thus clearly denying Dean's statement and putting the responsibility on the former White House counsel for the investigation now described as inadequate.

Asked why he repeatedly evaded the question whether the report was written or oral, Ziegler replied only that "at no time was there any question that an appropriate investigation was undertaken."

Ziegler said he frequently sought advice from Dean and members of his staff on how to reply to questions about the Watergate affair.

Asked if he had been involved in a cover-up in view of his refusal to say whether the report was written or oral, Ziegler replied that he was not. However, he acknowledged that there were "certain inadequacies" in his replies.

The "great portion" of his guidance on Watergate questions came from Dean's office although he did have discussion also with Ehrlichman, Ziegler said.

The President "without question" believed that an investigation had taken place and that it showed that no one then on the staff was involved in Watergate, the press secretary emphasized.