

Weicker Charges White House Smear

By Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward

Washington Post Staff Writers

Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.) charged yesterday that the White House had attempted to "smear" him personally as part of a continuing effort to impede the Senate Watergate committee's investigation. He called on Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox to investigate the matter for possible criminal action.

A spokesman for Cox said last night that Weicker's charges will be investigated. Federal sources reported that Cox's office already is investigating allegations, some of them made by former presidential counsel John W. Dean III, that the White House attempted to interfere, perhaps illegally, with the Senate committee's investigation.

Specifically, Weicker charged yesterday that a former presidential aide had been asked by the White House to develop and disseminate false information that the senator accepted improper contributions in his 1970 election campaign in Connecticut.

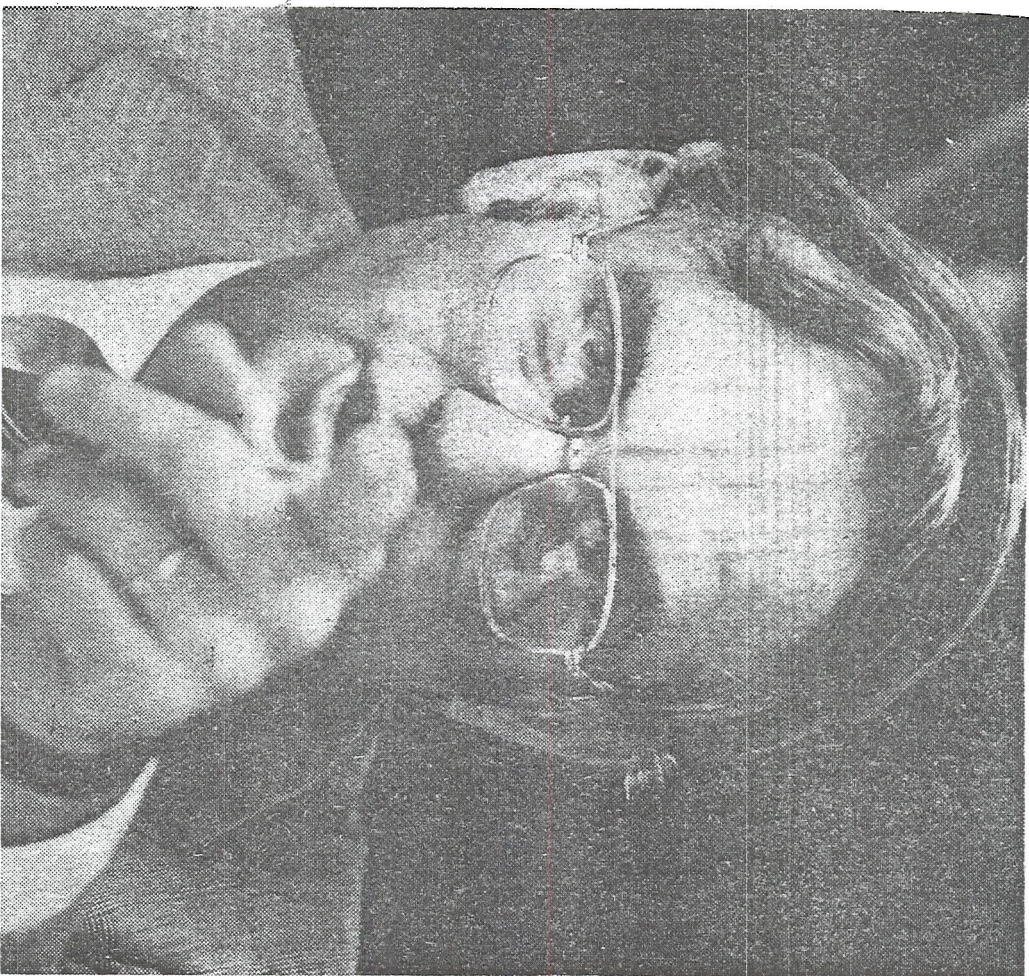
In the past several days, Weicker said later, a reporter whom he did not name was informed by former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson that Weicker had improperly handled contributions to his 1970 campaign.

Weicker said he first learned of such allegations on April 10, when an unnamed source told him that he had been asked by the White House to develop information that Weicker improperly handled contributions in 1970.

Weicker declined to identify the source, but federal and Senate investigators said the person was former White House aide Jack Gleason, who worked on campaign financing matters for the White House in 1970.

Weicker said yesterday that the source has information had turned down the alleged approach by the White House and had also been asked by several members of the press to confirm that the senator had improperly handled campaign contributions. The

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By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post
Sen. Lowell P. Weicker charges White House 'smear' to impede Senate probe.

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source, Weicker said, told the reporters the story had no basis.

On May 3, Weicker continued, former presidential counsel Dean informed him that the White House was attempting to "embarrass" him, apparently a reference to the campaign contributions story.

The Connecticut senator then read from a transcript of a tape-recorded conversation between former presidential deputy John D. Ehrlichman and former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst in which the two men discussed Weicker's role in the Senate Watergate investigation.

The conversation, according to Weicker, took place on March 28, two days after the senator had asserted in press statements that President Nixon's top advisers had condoned the use of political espionage during the 1972 campaign.

In the conversation, Ehrlichman is quoted as telling Kleindienst: "Well, the President's feeling is that it wouldn't be too bad for you to have your press conferences in the next couple of days to take a swing at that and just say we contacted the senator (Weicker) because we continue to exercise diligence in this thing and

we're determined to track down every lead and it turns out he (Weicker) doesn't have anything."

Weicker then recalled earlier testimony by Dean that Ehrlichman and former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman had devised a strategy to "restrain the investigation" of the Senate Watergate committee.

In one of the few oratorical flourishes of the Senate hearings, Weicker then accused the White House of continuing attempts to impede the investigation — including attempts by Colson to "smear" the senators — and said:

"Let's put it this way . . . There are going to be no more threats, no intimidation, no innuendo, no working through the press to go ahead and destroy the credibility of individuals. If the executive branch of government wants to meet the standards that the American people set for it in their mind then the time has come to stop reacting and stop playing this type of a game, and either disavow it completely or make the very specific charges that apparently are being leaked out either against the committee members, or against the witnesses appearing before this committee."



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

John Dean holds document as he awaits next question from Senate select Watergate committee yesterday afternoon.



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Sen. Weicker calls on prosecutor Cox to probe 'smear'