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Colson to Testify On Bug 'Cover-Up'

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WASHINGTON. — President Nixon's former White House counsel, Charles W. Colson, Saturday was reported ready to testify about the Administration's apparent "cover-up" of the Watergate case.

Colson has documentary evidence of the cover-up, a source close to him said.

This and other developments in the case, including disclosures that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and White House aide Fred LaRue have been targeted for possible indictments, came as President Nixon spent the Easter weekend with his family in Key Biscayne, Fla.

A source close to both

Mitchell and LaRue confirmed that the government had informed both men they were subjects of investigation and possible indictment.

Colson's law partner, David Shapiro, who conferred with government prosecutors Friday, asserted in an interview that Colson himself was innocent of any wrongdoing.

But, he added, "I figured out a long time ago that he would never get the herring out of his goddam back pocket until the guys who were really responsible were nailed."

Meanwhile, it was learned that Mitchell testified before the grand jury Friday that he had approved payments to defendants in the case after

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he did not know who might have initiated the plans, but that he did not consider Magruder a "self-starter."

In the White House, Magruder was an aide to H. R. Haldeman, chief of staff. Magruder, now a Commerce Department official, last weekend told government prosecutors that the bugging was planned by Mitchell, White House counsel John W. Dean 3d and convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy.

'Rejected Bug Plans'

Mitchell also reportedly told the jury he thought someone higher in the White House than Jeb Stuart Magruder had initiated bugging plans as part of the Republican campaign's overall political espionage plans.

Mitchell told the jury that while bugging plans were discussed by him and the other

A source close to the investigation said Mitchell testified

three men, he always rejected the plans. He testified that LaRue, a top aide of his, attended one of the meetings.

The jury reportedly greeted Mitchell's explanation with skepticism.

Colson's decision to talk may provide a link to help establish perhaps the biggest scandal growing out of Watergate — the widespread efforts to cover it up.

The questioning of Mitchell, according to an informed source, showed the government is investigating these major areas of possible law violations: a bugging conspiracy and other political es-

pionage; perjury, and the use of money to silence witnesses, and statutes covering obstruction of justice.

'Not a Target'

In a telephone interview, Shapiro said, "Chuck Colson has taken it in the ass for eight months and has not said anything. We'll be in a position to say something very shortly and we will have plenty to say, and it's going to be a good story."

Shapiro telephoned a reporter and asked that his comments not be published, saying he had a "standing rule" with reporters that he not be quoted. However, he had mentioned nothing about being off the record during the interview with the reporter, who had never talked with him before. Colson could not be reached for comment.)

Meanwhile, Washington attorney John J. Wilson said on Saturday that he had been hired to give legal advice on

the Watergate case to Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, the President's top domestic adviser.

United Press International reported that Wilson has been seen at the White House every day for the last three days. Asked if he had conferred personally with the President on the matter, Wilson said, "I'm not going to deny that I saw the President."

Presidential counsel John W. Dean 3d, who said last week that he would not allow himself to become a "scapegoat" in the Watergate case, also was involved in supervising the payments to the conspirators, according to government sources and associates of Dean.

The associates said last week that Dean is prepared to implicate Haldeman, the President's principal assistant, in the attempt to cover up the White House role in the Watergate bugging and other political espionage and sabotage.

Two sources have told the Washington post that Dean tried to stop the payments and quoted the presidential counsel as saying he was acting on orders from White House superiors in continuing them. One source quoted Dean as saying "this has gone too far," when asked to approve more of the payments late this winter.