

Colson: New Round Of Denials

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By Jules Witcover

Washington Post Staff Writer

It was another day of denials yesterday in the increasingly public life of Charles W. Colson, the former presidential special counsel known as a particularly unpublic figure during his days on the White House staff.

Colson, now a lawyer in Washington, testified before the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Investigations subcommittee and either during or after the hearing denied that:

- He ever pressed Jeb S. Magruder, former deputy director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, for speedier approval in early 1972 of funds to undertake political espionage against the Democrats.

- He ever was specifically involved in negotiations with International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. officials in their efforts to have federal antitrust actions dropped against a proposed major ITT merger.

- He ever took any action on a blunt memorandum from a law partner dated April 19 urging that their firm, Colson and Shapiro, "lean on" then Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman G. Bradford Cook Jr. to appoint a man as SEC general counsel favorable to the firm's interests.

About the only newsworthy admission Colson made in the process of his denials was his first public confirmation that early 1972 he sent E. Howard Hunt, later

one of the Watergate conspirators, to Denver to interview Mrs. Dita Beard, the ITT employee who was alleged to have written a memo linking ITT offers to help underwrite 1972 the Republican National Convention with efforts to beat the antitrust action.

Colson said he previously had made the admission privately to FBI agents. Hunt, wearing a red wig and glasses obtained from the CIA, reported back, Colson said, that Mrs. Beard had "disavowed the memo" without acknowledging it was a forgery.

Of Magruder's testimony yesterday at the Senate Watergate hearings that Colson had called him asking when money requested by re-election committee counsel G. Gordon Liddy would be made available for political intelligence against the Democrats, Colson said:

"If that is what Mr. Magruder said, that is not the case. That is not accurate . . . I never made any such representation to Mr. Magruder . . . I had no knowledge of or involvement in the Watergate."

Colson was interrogated by the House subcommittee largely on the basis of confidential ITT memos in the subcommittee's hands referring to a meeting Colson attended with two key ITT officials on Aug. 4, 1970, in the White House office of John Ehrlichman, then President Nixon's chief aide for domestic affairs.

Subcommittee Chairman Harley O. Staggers (D-W.Va.) characterized the memos as "damaging" to Colson, but the former White House aide said the 1970 meeting was devoted to a general discussion of Nixon administration policy toward mergers, not any specific negotiations on ITT's case.