

Watergate Committee Will Meet With Dean In Closed Session

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate Watergate committee meets behind closed doors Monday with fired White House counsel John W. Dean III to prepare its star witness for his appearance at televised public hearings Tuesday.

The panel's vice chairman, Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr., R-Tenn., predicted Sunday that

Dean "will tell a rather complete story," hopefully unbridged by claims of executive privilege or an attorney-client relationship with President Nixon.

At the committee's executive session, the senators are expected to consider national security issues and Dean's many conversations with Nixon to determine how much can be brought out publicly without exposing critical government secrets or violating the right of a client to talk to his attorney without fear of disclosure.

Baker, interviewed on the

ABC broadcast "Issues and Answers," said he hopes the President won't invoke executive privilege or the attorney-client relationship to block Dean's testimony.

"The usual and traditional and historic role of attorney-client would not seem to obtain," Baker said, because Dean was a member of the White House staff and not a personal attorney retained by Nixon.

Various accounts indicate Dean may be the one man willing to talk who could offer direct evidence that President Nixon was aware of the Watergate coverup. Others say he can't, either because it isn't true or because Dean wasn't close enough to the President to know whether it was true or not.

But Dean's testimony about

the hydra-headed scandal is sure to be explosive. Federal prosecutors have said the 34-year-old lawyer was "at the center of a very profound kind of corruption" using his position of trust "to foster a pervasive scheme to obstruct justice."

Previous testimony has linked Dean to meetings at which plans to break into and bug Democratic headquarters in the Watergate were discussed. And The Associated Press has learned that Dean is prepared to testify that then-presidential chief of staff H.R. Haldeman was aware of those plans as well.

Haldeman has denied any prior knowledge of the break-in a year ago and has insisted he had no knowledge of a coverup. Informed sources, however, have said Haldeman's aide, Gordon Strachan, is prepared to swear—after he gains immunity for his testimony—that he relayed the bugging plans to his boss.

The New York Times and Time magazine quoted sources
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Sunday as saying Dean also is prepared to testify that the head of the "Plumbers" group in the White House told him orders for the Ellsberg burglary came "from the Oval Office" of the President.

Egil Krogh, whom Nixon named to head a squad of men directed to plug national-security news leaks, has admitted he supervised the burglary of files belonging to Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist in an effort to gain information on the man who leaked the Pentagon Papers.

But Krogh has said Nixon impressed on him the importance of his leak-plugging mission but didn't tell him to commit a crime in carrying out his job.

Nixon said on May 22 that he didn't learn of the 1971 burglary until this year.

Earlier reports have said Dean is prepared to say Nixon personally congratulated him for his role in covering up the Watergate affair and that the President said it would be no problem to raise \$1 million to pay for the silence of the convicted conspirators.

In another development, Baker revealed that a special assistant to the President had asked him some months ago if the White House "might have" some say in the selection of committee counsel.

"I told him: no, he could not," the senator said, and the matter was dropped.

Baker said he "didn't read anything extraordinary into it" at the time. But asked if such an offer couldn't be interpreted as a move to plant a White House voice on the committee staff, the panel's vice chairman said: "That's why I said no."

Baker said the aide to whom he talked was Wallace H. Johnson, who was special assistant for legislative affairs. The White house switchboard said Sunday he resigned "some time ago."