

# Nixon aide hits threat in bug case

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WASHINGTON, March 19—  
the White House reacted sharply today to threats to force Presidential aides to testify before a special Senate committee investigating the Watergate bugging case.

"Sensational statements about forcing White House aides to testify should not obscure the central fact that the President has said the White House will cooperate, but consistent with the constitutional intent of separation of powers," said Ronald Ziegler, White House press secretary. "The White House has and will continue to cooperate."

LAST WEEK, President Nixon said he would not allow John W. Dean III, his White House counsel, to testify in person before the Senate Judiciary Committee considering the nomination of L. Patrick Gray as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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The hearings which have focused on White House involvement in the FBI's investigation of the Watergate case last year. Nixon said Dean would reply in writing to any committee questions pertinent to the Gray hearings.

Yesterday, Sen. Sam Ervin [D., N. C.], chairman of the special senate committee named to investigate the Watergate case, suggested that he might order the arrest of White House aides if they refused to cooperate with his committee.

Ziegler refused to address the threat directly, but his reference to "sensational statements" was in response to a question about White House reaction to Ervin's statement.

ON CAPITOL HILL, Sen. Hugh Scott [Pa.], Senate Republican leader, dismissed Ervin's remark as "bombast" and predicted the matter will not go that far.

The Judiciary Committee hearings on Gray's confirmation, which have turned into a mini-Watergate hearing because of Gray's involvement in the FBI investigation of the case, will resume tomorrow.