

Former Nixon Aide Talks

TOP FIGURES NAMED IN BUGGING PLOT

Mitchell, Dean 'OK'd Watergate'

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Washington

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and White House counsel John W. Dean III approved and helped plan the Watergate bugging operation, according to President Nixon's former special assistant Jeb Stuart Magruder.

Mitchell and Dean later arranged to buy the silence of the seven convicted Watergate conspirators, Magruder also has said.

Magruder, the deputy campaign manager, for the President, made these statements to federal prosecutors Saturday, according to three sources in the White House and the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

JURY

The sources said that Magruder is scheduled to testify before the Watergate grand jury today and is expected to repeat the statements under oath.

One of the sources went so far as to say that Magruder's statements and other information developed by the prosecutors — especially regarding the payments of cash to the conspirators — are expected to result in the criminal indictment of both Mitchell and Dean.

Dean's resignation as counsel to the President is considered imminent, according to sources in the White House.

Two sources in the executive branch said yesterday that White House chief of staff H.R. (Bob) Haldeman also may resign as a result of recent Watergate disclosures. There is no known ev-

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idence to link Haldeman to criminal involvement in the bugging, the sources said.

CHOICE

Magruder, who served at the White House as a deputy to Haldeman and later as Mitchell's principal assistant at the President's re-election committee, "chose to talk because he felt the walls were coming in on him," one source said.

Magruder will not be granted immunity from prosecution, the sources said, but he hopes to receive some sort of favorable treatment.

President Nixon was briefed on the Justice Department's latest findings Sunday, a day after Magruder spoke to the prosecutors. On Tuesday, Mr. Nixon, in his statement, announcing "major developments" in the Watergate case, said: "I have expressed to the appropriate authorities my view that no individual holding, in the past or present, a position of major importance in the Administration should be given immunity from prosecution."

Informed of the report of Magruder's statement last night, deputy White House press secretary Gerald Warren issued the following statement: "The White House is not prepared to react to a story based on sources. At a (future) time when the rights of individuals would not be jeopardized by a comment, an appropriate comment will be made."

Earlier yesterday, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler told reporters, "I'm not going to answer any questions on the subject (Watergate), no matter how they are phrased."

A spokesman for Mitchell, who has previously denied advance knowledge of the bugging, said the former attorney general would have no comment on the story.

The Mitchells could not be reached last night at their 5th Avenue apartment in New York. The building doorman told newsmen, "I was told not to disturb them any more tonight."

He said "She (Mrs. Mitchell) told me not to take any messages or disturb her."

Magruder could not be reached for comment. His attorney, James J. Bierbower, would not comment on the contents of the Washington Post story. "I will confirm that he will testify before the grand jury when he is called," Bierbower said.

MEETING

According to the Post's sources, Magruder provided the prosecutors with a first-hand account of a February, 1972, meeting in Attorney General Mitchell's office to discuss and approve the illegal electronic eavesdropping operation at the Watergate. At the time, Mitchell was the Nation's chief law enforcement officer.

Those who attended the meeting were Mitchell, Dean, Liddy and Magruder, according to the sources' account of Magruder's statements.

Convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. testified before the grand jury and Senate Watergate committee that he was told by Liddy that there was such a meeting in February at which the bugging was planned and discussed.

McCord's testimony was based on hearsay but Magruder's statements to the prosecutors provide evidence that can be used to obtain convictions, the sources said.

PAYMENTS

The prosecutors also have received statements from other persons who can testify that Mitchell and Dean were involved in the arrangements to pay the seven Watergate conspirators for their silence, the sources said.

Dean has acknowledged to others that he was involved in arranging the payments, one of the sources said, but he has maintained that he was acting on orders.

Frederick C. LaRue, a former White House aide and assistant to Mitchell on the Nixon re-election committee, was also involved in the payments — reportedly totaling well over \$100,000 — the sources said.

LaRue, who investigators have said helped direct a "housecleaning" at the re-election committee, in which documents were destroyed after the Watergate bugging, was subpoenaed by the grand jury yesterday.

REPORT

The Post reported earlier this month that following the Watergate bugging, LaRue received \$70,000 in Nixon campaign funds from the same account that financed the illegal electronic eavesdropping. Federal investigators are now attempting to learn whether that money was used to pay the Watergate conspirators for their silence.

Magruder, 38, was chosen by the White House to coordinate the President's 1972 inauguration. He has been a target of the federal grand jury investigation since it re-opened its inquiry last month.

He testified on January 23 at the Watergate trial that he had no knowledge of the Watergate bugging, but said that he helped establish what was supposed to be a "legal" and "ethical" intelligence-gathering operation.

Magruder testified that he authorized the payment of at least \$235,000 to Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy to run the operation.

Liddy, who is serving a prison sentence of at least six years and eight months for his conviction, has repeatedly refused to cooperate with the federal investigation.

MITCHELL

Mitchell resigned as attorney general on March 1, 1972, to assume command of the Nixon re-election effort. The director of the successful 1968 campaign, Mitchell was then considered the President's chief political adviser.

Mitchell's reign as head of the Nixon re-election campaign lasted exactly four months and one day. He resigned from the post last July — two weeks after the Watergate break-in — citing a desire to spend more time with his wife, Martha. Mitchell denied any link between his resignation and the Watergate affair.

Last August 29, the President announced that, based on an investigation by Dean, "no one in the White House staff, no one presently employed in this administration was involved in this very bizarre incident . . ."

The Dean investigation was cited repeatedly in the

following months by White House spokesmen when asked whether presidential assistants were involved in the Watergate affair.

Dean's name emerged again in March, during Sen-

ate confirmation hearings on the President's nomination of L. Patrick L. Gray III to be permanent director of the FBI. Gray disclosed that he had turned over secret FBI files on the Watergate case

to Dean and, in response to questioning, agreed that the presidential counsel "probably" lied when he told FBI investigators that he would "have to check" on whether Hunt had a White House office.