

MITCHELL'S SIDE OF THE STORY

OK'd Payments
to Watergate ?

WASHINGTON—(UPI)—The Washington Post said today that former Attorney General John Mitchell told a federal grand jury yesterday he approved payments from campaign funds to the seven Watergate conspirators after their June 17 arrest.

The newspaper attributed the information to "a Mitchell associate" who was not named.

It said Mitchell maintained under oath that the money was intended to pay legal fees of the Watergate defendants, not to buy their silence. No amounts were stated.

Higher Ups

The Post quoted the same source as saying Mitchell testified he believes Jeb Stuart Magruder, then deputy presidential campaign manager, went over Mitchell's head to unnamed officials at the White House to get approval for the Watergate bugging.

The associate was quoted as saying that Mitchell readily acknowledged to the grand jury that he had discussed plans for the bugging — the last time during a meeting with Magruder in Key Biscayne, Fla.

But Mitchell, speaking to newsmen yesterday after testifying, insisted he ordered the plans dropped.

"I never approved any bugging plans during any period during the campaign," were Mitchell's words on emerging from the grand jury.

Not Specific

But in a thrust-and-parry news conference, he was anything but specific.

Asked about such discussions, Mitchell said, "I have heard discussions of such things. They have always been cut off at all times and I would like to know who it was that kept bringing them back and back and back."

Mitchell's attorney, William Hundley, was more specific. "He knew that certain people had an intelligence plan that included bugging," Hundley said. "But he cut it off in all occasions. He never ratified it. He shut it off."

Payments

Mitchell, according to the Post account, testified that White House Counsel John W. Dean III and former White House aide Frederick C. Larue, an assistant to Mitchell during the re-election campaign, were both involved in making the post-arrest payments to the Watergate conspirators.

Mitchell testified that he turned down Watergate

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remained here.

Ehrlichman, Nixon's chief counsellor on domestic affairs, and Haldeman, his chief of staff, are popularly known in Washington as "the Berlin Wall" that isolates the President.

Haldeman's name has reportedly been raised in testimony before the grand jury. The Washington Post, in a report attributed to a friend of White House counselor Dean, said the latter was ready to give testimony that Haldeman had been instrumental in attempting to cover up the political espionage.

Haldeman was the main link from the White House to the Committee to Re-Elect the President, which allegedly financed the Watergate caper.

Ehrlichman's name has not been prominent in the Watergate investigations so

far. He talked with Mitchell one week ago in an unpublished meeting at the White House, when he was understood to have explained Nixon's decision to open the

books on the Watergate case and order all past and present White House aides to cooperate fully with the grand jury and the Senate committee.

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ging plans three times, but believes high White House officials approved them anyway, the account said.

The associate was quoted as saying that Mitchell expects to be indicted along with Dean, Magruder and Larue.

Haldeman & Ehrlichman

Not yet directly involved, top White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman are being advised on the Watergate case by a leading Washington lawyer, it was disclosed.

John L. Wilson of the prestigious law firm of Carmody and Wilson confirmed today he had been engaged to advise the two "on matters now before the press."

Wilson was seen at the White House every day for the past three days, following consultations among President Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman at the presidential hideaway at Camp David, Md.

Wilson would not say whether he had conferred with Nixon, but "I'm not going to deny that I saw the President."

Nixon flew to his villa at Key Biscayne, Fla., yesterday but Haldeman who usually accompanies him on such trips, and Ehrlichman