

3 Top Nixon Aides Tied to Cover-Up

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**Dean Cites
 Haldeman,
 Ehrlichman**

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At least two high-level White House officials have concluded that the cover-up in the Watergate bugging case was supervised by President Nixon's principal deputies, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman.

A third White House official, presidential counsel John W. Dean III, intends to swear under oath that he gave regular reports on the progress of the cover-up to Haldeman and Ehrlichman at their direction, reliable sources reported yesterday.

According to one high-level White House source, the President and his top advisers are aware of Dean's plans and are attempting to devise a strategy that would offset Dean's charges.

This source, and others in the White House, said that the current state of White House confusion and internal staff warfare is largely attributable to what Dean has already revealed to investigators and the fear that he will reveal more.

The presidential counsel, according to White House sources, has knowledge of illegal activities—including wiretapping—by the Nixon administration dating back to 1969. In addition, the sources said, Dean has relatively thorough knowledge of the widespread campaign of political espionage and sabotage undertaken on behalf of President Nixon's re-election.

Dean, according to two White House officials not usually identified as critics of Haldeman and Ehrlichman, was directed by those two presidential deputies to insure that the Watergate bugging never be linked to Mr. Nixon's aides at the White House or the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

In addition, the two officials reported, Dean was directed by Haldeman and Ehrlichman to prevent the disclosure of other campaign espionage and sabotage activities.

See **WATERGATE, A10, Col. 1**

Dean Cites Two Key Aides, Haldeman and Ehrlichman

WATERGATE, From A1

Haldeman has served as President Nixon's White House chief of staff, the man who decides what papers and people are seen by the President. Ehrlichman is the President's chief domestic adviser.

White House sources said that Dean has kept records and other documents that he believes constitute circumstantial evidence that Haldeman and Ehrlichman directed the coverup.

In addition, they reported, Dean has written a history of his version of the Watergate bugging and what was done to prevent public disclosure that President Nixon's aides were responsible for it.

Apparently Dean intends to submit the report to either the Watergate grand jury, the Senate's select committee investigating the bugging or both, the sources said.

According to Dean's associates, the presidential counsel contends he first became involved in the coverup when he was asked by Haldeman and Ehrlichman to obtain information for President Nixon surrounding the Watergate bugging.

Dean himself has been accused of approving the bugging, along with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former Haldeman deputy who served as the No. 2 official in the President's re-election campaign.

Meanwhile, the President took to the solitude of his mountaintop retreat at Camp David, Md., yesterday—alone, with no members of his staff or his family. He was confronted with what White House sources said might be one of his last opportunities to act decisively in the case.

When on April 17, less than two weeks ago, the President announced that there had been "major developments" in the Watergate investigation, he is understood to have believed that new indictments would

be handed down within several weeks.

Reliable sources have said that anywhere from four to 10 of the President's former and present aides would be indicted for involvement in the Watergate bugging and the subsequent attempt to obstruct the federal investigation into the case.

Now, White House sources said yesterday, the President realizes that the indictments will not come for at least another several weeks.

"We may not even see indictments in May," said one source yesterday. "Anyone who realizes the slowness of a grand jury investigation, especially with all these high-level entanglements, would see it's a long way off."

Previously, the sources said the President had decided to postpone any decisions about a staff shake-up until the grand jury acted.

Several White House sources said they think the grand jury delay will force the President to make a public statement or take action this next week.

As one midlevel White House staff member said yesterday: "The President, the office of the presidency, can't take another two weeks of bombardment."

At the same time the White House sources reported that Haldeman and Ehrlichman are encouraging the President to wait.

"It's fully a personal loyalty thing with Haldeman and Ehrlichman. They probably don't say much to the President, but you can see the wounded looks on their faces," one White House official said.

The President also faces problems other than the grand jury delay.

White House and Justice Department officials are saying that evidence is developing to show that convicted Watergate conspirators E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy were involved in still more "dirty tricks" like the alleged burglary of the office of the psychiatrist for Pentagon

papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg.

The final problem for the President is the select Senate Watergate investigating committee that is continuing its closed-door inquiry into

Even if the grand jury does not return indictments against a large number of the President's former and present aides, it appears certain that the Senate committee will involve many of them in the broader political espionage campaign which was a basic part of the White House strategy in the 1972 presidential election.

Several Republican Senators said privately this week that with the recent escalation of the Watergate affair, an association with it could become a permanent stigma which no presidential advisor could weather.

"An ugly grilling before the Senate committee," and TV cameras about political spying, though it involves nothing illegal, could be just as ruinous as an indictment," one Senate said.

As in the past when the President has been on the verge of a major decision, he has isolated himself, and not just by going off to Camp David, according to White House sources.

As one source put it: "The President is talking to about five or six people, but bringing in all the information and all the recommendations to himself—apparently not letting anyone see the rest of the information. So the President is the chief investigator, the only one with the big picture."

Those involved in discussions with the President include Haldeman, Ehrlichman, White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, special consultant Leonard Garment, special counsel Richard A. Moore, and special presidential assistant Patrick J. Buchanan.

Though routine White House business continued yesterday, several officials reported that the decision-making process at the highest levels seemed to be paralyzed.

Some officials predicted dramatic action by the President, while others said they expected the President to ride out the storm.

Complaints from Congress continued as Rep. Wright Patman (D-Tex.), chairman of the House Banking and Currency Committee, said at a press conference in Columbus, Ohio:

"Some of the drift that is occurring on pressing economic matters and other important domestic issues is the direct result of the disarray that Watergate has created in this administration. Decisions on legislative matters are being held up by the White House and the situation is getting worse hourly."

The President canceled a meeting yesterday with his top economic strategists to spend the weekend at the Maryland retreat.

In another development, a source close to former Acting FBI director L. Patrick Gray III said that Gray offered to resign Thursday night before news stories broke about his involvement in the destruction of evidence in the Watergate case.

According to the source, Gray offered his resignation to Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, who in turn talked with the President.

Gray then received word that the President wanted him to stay on, the source said.

A White House official disputed this version and said yesterday that the President had left the matter pending Thursday night.

However, at the Friday morning meeting with his FBI staff after the news stories broke, Gray was advised by senior bureau officials that he should resign at once to preserve what one source said "might be left of the bureau's reputation."

Gray then contacted the White House Friday morning to inform the President that he was resigning—no matter what.

White House spokesman Ziegler then conveyed the impression to reporters that Gray had been forced out.