

Dean Gave Probe Report To Ehrlichman Not Nixon

Washington

The White House conceded yesterday that President Nixon had not talked directly with his former counsel, John W. Dean III in ordering him to investigate the Watergate case and in receiving a report on the inquiry.

Instead, said Presidential Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, Mr. Nixon passed messages to and received assurances from Dean through "senior staff members."

He confirmed a New York Times story identifying John D. Ehrlichman, who recently resigned as the Presi-

dent's chief domestic adviser, as the conduit for Mr. Nixon's communications with Dean. The article also reported, and Ziegler affirmed, that Mr. Nixon had received only an oral report.

The press secretary suggested that other senior staff members may also have been involved in conveying assurances to the president. But informed White House sources left no doubt that Ehrlichman was the key figure.

He insisted that an investigation had, in fact, been carried out and that Dean "was clearly in charge" of it. But he said that "there was cer-

tain inadequacy" to the information that Dean provided on the investigation.

Dean, who was discharged by the President last month, said last week that there had been an effort to discredit him personally so as to undercut the testimony he is expected to give to the Senate hearings on the case. Earlier, he had vowed not to become a "scapegoat."

Mr. Nixon relied upon the Dean investigation for his assertion, at an August 29 news conference, that no White House aides had been involved in the Watergate break-in.

N.Y. Times Service