

Magruder Version Disputes Haldeman

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Testimony in the Watergate hearings yesterday by Jeb Stuart Magruder differs sharply with public statements by former top White House aide H. R. Haldeman as to whether Haldeman might have had advance knowledge of the bugging and whether he was warned last January that a cover-up was proceeding.

Haldeman, in a sworn deposition given May 22 in connection with civil suits that grew out of the Watergate arrests, said he had no advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging and break-in, and that he did not learn of the cover-up until late March.

But Magruder, in his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, said that he sent memos describing plans for the bugging to an assistant of Haldeman, with the apparent assumption that the information contained in them would be given to Haldeman.

Magruder said the memos went to Gordon Strachan and that he could not say with certainty that Haldeman saw them.

Magruder, former White House aide who later served as deputy director of the Nixon re-election campaign, also said that Strachan had seen the "Gemstone" documents. The documents contained the information obtained from the wiretaps placed on a telephone at Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate on Memorial Day weekend last year.

And it was Strachan's job, Magruder said, to keep Haldeman informed of what the re-election committee was doing.

Also in his testimony yesterday, Magruder said he had gone to Haldeman in January of this year and "laid out the true facts" that "this whole Watergate situation and the other activities was a concerted effort by a number of people."

If Magruder's testimony is true, it would mean that Haldeman knew that Magruder was going to commit perjury at the trial of the seven persons accused of the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Haldeman's lawyer, John J. Wilson, yesterday disputed Magruder's testimony. In a telephone interview, Wilson said that Haldeman has told him that Magruder

did not tell Haldeman until late March that he (Magruder) and others were involved in the Watergate affair.

Even at that time, though, Wilson said, Magruder "came forth with some admissions" but not the whole story. It was in late March, President Nixon has said, that he ordered his own, new investigation into the Watergate affair.

As for having any advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging or having seen any documents detailing plans for the affair, Wilson said "Mr. Haldeman would deny ever seeing such documents or knowing anything in advance" about the proposed break-in and bugging.

In his own sworn deposition, Haldeman also had denied having any advance knowledge of the Watergate break-in and bugging and said he was unaware until late March that a cover-up had occurred.

In the deposition, Haldeman did acknowledge for the first time that his office received reports on Nixon campaign committee intelligence operations against the Democrats.

The reports, he said, were not the result of the Watergate bugging. He said it was possible he had seen one of the non-Watergate reports, but that he did not recall doing so.

The documents, Haldeman said in his deposition, came to Strachan and were identified as "Sedan Chair." In recent testimony to the Watergate committee, "Sedan Chair" was identified as the code name for at least one Nixon campaign committee operative working last year in the presidential campaign of Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.).

Haldeman specifically denied ever seeing any "Gemstone" wiretap information.

In the deposition, Haldeman also said that Strachan was his chief liaison man with the Nixon campaign committee and that "he kept me advised of information, material that was being produced by the committee."

Haldeman has said very little else publicly. One of his few statements that was heard by a large number of people was made in March in an off-the-record meeting with some congressmen.