

President Opposed Hunt Hush Money

By Peter Osnos
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon said on March 21 that a demand from Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. that he be paid as much as \$1 million for his continued silence about White House-initiated intelligence operations was "wrong, that it would not work (and) that the truth would come out anyway," according to a Senate Watergate committee memorandum.

The demand for money was relayed by then White House counsel John W. Dean III, according to the memorandum, which is based on information supplied the committee by the White House.

The President's response, the memorandum states, was: "How could it (the money) possibly be paid, what makes you think he would be satisfied with that?"

The Senate Watergate committee memorandum is a summary compiled from information supplied orally and in writing by White House officials on the President's meetings with Dean from April, 1972, until April, 1973. Included are 37 meetings or telephone conversations that the White House says Mr. Nixon had with Dean between Feb. 27 and April 22 of this year.

Dean has reportedly told Senate investigators and federal prosecutors that he discussed aspects of the Watergate cover-up with Mr. Nixon or in Mr. Nixon's presence on at least 35 occasions between January and April, 1973. Dean has not yet, however, made those allegations under oath.

The White House version of those meetings disputes Dean's by stating that he did not tell Mr. Nixon until March 21 that a number of

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White House officials probably knew either about the bugging in advance or participated in the cover-up.

One of the charges reportedly made by Dean is that the President told Dean at a meeting shortly before the sentencing of the seven Watergate defendants March 23 that there would

be no problem paying \$1 million to the conspirators for their continued silence. That money, Dean has supposedly told investigators, was to be in addition to \$460,000 paid to the conspirators that Dean contends the President knew about.

The White House account of a discussion about the payment of \$1 million, which it says took place on March 21, deals with Hunt's demand for money. The Senate memorandum says that "Hunt was trying to blackmail (Presidential aide John D.) Ehrlichman about Hunt's prior plumber activities unless he was paid what ultimately might amount to \$1 million."

The "plumber" reference is to the White House "Special Investigations Unit" set up in July, 1971, after the publication of the Pentagon Papers, to plug news leaks to newspapers. Hunt was member of the unit.

Ehrlichman has admitted knowing that Hunt broke into the Los Angeles office of the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers to the press, but Ehrlichman did not report that break-in to police.

After Dean told Mr. Nixon of Hunt's demand, according to the Senate memorandum, the president said it was wrong, would not work and the truth would come out anyway.

Dean then said, the memorandum continues, "that a Cuban group could possibly be used to transfer the payments." No other mention of a \$1 million figure appears in the White House version of the Nixon-Dean meetings.

The memorandum, made available to some newspapers Wednesday and confirmed as authentic yesterday by knowledgeable sources, is the latest in a series of leaks this week concerning Dean's forthcoming testimony before the Senate select committee on the Watergate affair.

Dean had been scheduled to testify this week, but his appearance was put off until next week because of the visit of Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev.

The purpose of the leaks

is not clear. Some are evidently designed to discredit Dean's testimony; others may be intended to bolster his credibility; still others may have been leaked because of internal political friction within the Senate Watergate committee itself. In any event, the general intention of the leaks appears to be to influence public opinion about Dean in advance of his nationally televised appearance next week.

The Senate committee's memorandum about the Dean-Nixon meetings began with the committee's request of White House logs of the sessions after the publication of Dean's allegations about what went on there. The White House turned over a seven-page listing of the dates, times and place of the meetings, along with who else was there and, in a few cases, what was discussed.

In response to the committee's request for more detailed information, White House officials, including Leonard Garment, the present White House counsel, and J. Fred Buzhardt, the President's special counsel, orally described the sessions for committee staff.

White House officials refused to comment yesterday on the substance of the Senate committee's memorandum, as it appeared in the press, saying it is based on the interpretation made by the Senate staff members of what Garment, Buzhardt and others told them.

The memorandum begins with a meeting September 15, 1972, the date of the indictments of the seven Watergate conspirators: "Dean reports on (Internal Revenue Service) IRS investigation of Larry (Lawrence F.) O'Brien (then the chairman of the Democratic Party). Dean reported on Watergate indictments."

(O'Brien, reacting yesterday to the disclosure that IRS was conducting an investigation of him, commented: "I have been subjected to intensive scrutiny by the IRS since 1970 upon my return as Democratic national chairman. Up to this point I had no reason to believe that the audits were on anything but the merits, now I'm not sure.")

(An O'Brien associate said that O'Brien had to hire a lawyer and accountant to deal with the IRS audit and the cost to him in fees was about \$10,000. The result of the audit was an adjustment upward in O'Brien's taxes of a few hundred dollars.)

On Feb. 28, 1973, the mem-

orandum continues, "President inquired of Watergate, Dean said no White House involvement." Dean added that Nixon associates mentioned in connection with Watergate, including then special counsel Charles W. Colson and Maurice H. Stans, the Nixon campaign's chief fund-raiser, were victims of circumstance. "Dean suggested," according to the memorandum, "they make sure that wiretaps of previous years (other administrations) be made known."

On March 1, the President was preparing for a press conference: "Was decided the question would come up as to why Dean was sitting in on FBI interviews and that reason was he was conducting an investigation for the President. President asked Dean to write a re-

port. Dean was also critical of Gray (a reference to L. Patrick Gray III, then acting FBI director.)

On March 13, the memorandum goes on, the President again asked about the involvement in Watergate of specific White House and campaign officials. For the first time, Dean said that Gordon Strachan, an aide to then White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman could have been involved.

March 17: "Dean again suggested they bring out the 1968 bugging and President said (then Attorney General Richard) Kleindienst had advised against it. Several names were discussed as possibly subject to attack: Colson, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, (former Attorney General and Nixon campaign di-

rector John N. Mitchell and Dean.

The President asked Dean point-blank if he knew about the planned break-in in advance. Dean said no, there was no actual White House involvement regardless of appearances except possibly Strachan. Dean told President (that deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart) Magruder pushed (Watergate conspirator G. Gordon) Liddy hard but that Haldeman was not involved."

March 20: "The President called Dean that night and Dean said there was 'not a scintilla of evidence' to indicate White House involvement and Dean suggested he give the President a more in-depth briefing of what had transpired."

That call set the stage, according to the memoran-

dum, for the meeting on March 21 when the President first learned of the probable involvement of his close associates in the Watergate affair. It was that meeting the President was apparently referring to when on April 17 he said he had learned important new facts about the case on March 21.

Two days later, Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. made his celebrated accusation before U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica that perjury had been committed at the Watergate trial in January and political pressure applied on the defendants to keep them silent. Following McCord's public letter, disclosures about those involved in the Watergate increased markedly.

There had been speculation that it was McCord's letter that forced the White House to confront the Watergate affair, but according to the Senate memorandum, Dean finally "gave the President his theory of what had happened" on March 21 and from then on the President moved quickly to deal with the situation.

"He (Dean) still said no prior June 17 White House knowledge," the memorandum states, "that Magruder probably knew, that Mitchell probably* knew, that Strachan probably knew, that Haldeman had possibly seen the fruits of the wiretaps through Strachan, that Ehrlichman was vulnerable because of his approval of (Herbert W.) Kalmbach's (fund-raising activity). [Kalmbach was then the

President's personal lawyer who had allegedly raised hush money for the Watergate defendants], Colson had made the call to Magruder (urging him to approve a Liddy intelligence plan.)"

Then came the discussion about Hunt's demand for more money. "Dean said Colson had talked to Hunt about executive clemency," the memorandum goes on.

"Dean said nothing of his role in regard to the cover-up money . . . This information was gone over twice, the last time in Haldeman's presence.

"Later that afternoon it was tentatively decided that everyone would go to the grand jury, however, Dean wanted immunity. Haldeman suggested that they write the whole thing out and release it from the

White House. Ehrlichman said there should be no executive privilege claim and that no one should ask for immunity. The President told them to discuss these matters with Mitchell."

On March 23, the memorandum says, the President told Dean to go to Camp David and on March 30 "after it became obvious Dean would write no report the President directed Ehrlichman to investigate."

The final meeting was on April 16: "The President asks Dean to resign. Had two drafts prepared for Dean's signature. Dean demanded Haldeman and Ehrlichman resign also."

On April 30, the President ordered Dean to submit his resignation—which Dean did—but the two did not meet that day.

* possibly N.Y.T 6/21/73