

Dean Slips From Pomp to

Unenviable Circumstance

By John Hanrahan
Washington Post Staff Writer

When President Nixon selected John Wesley Dean III to conduct the in-house investigation of the Watergate bugging affair last summer, it hardly caused a ripple.

As the 34-year-old, fresh-faced, chief legal counsel to the President since July, 1970, Dean had not had a breath of scandal attached to his name. Until that point, Dean had operated in the shadow of other more prominent White House aides and seldom had his name in the newspapers.

But since then, Dean has moved from the role of the investigator, the citizen above suspicion, to become one of the investigated and a key figure in the continuing Watergate drama.

The President said last Aug. 29 that Dean's investigation cleared "present employees" of the White House of having advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging, a predictable occurrence as far as most Democrats and cynical observers were concerned. At the time Dean was being viewed by the public as nothing more than an investigator for the White House.

Then, in recent weeks and months, the private allegations of federal investigators began to find their way into print. First, it was charged that Dean had interfered with the FBI probe of the Watergate case.

Then, L. Patrick Gray III, testifying at Senate confirmation hearings on his nomination to be FBI director, gave substance to some of the allegations by disclosing that he had laid out virtu-

ally the entire FBI investigation in front of Dean by turning over to him 82 basic files on the case and allowing Dean, at Dean's insistence, to be present while 14 White House aides were interviewed last summer and fall by the FBI.

The possible seriousness of all this was revealed with full force last month when convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. told Senate investigators privately that Dean had advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging. McCord said he had been told this by convicted fellow Watergate conspirators G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr.

Further, McCord told investigators, Liddy had told him the Watergate break-in and bugging were plotted four months in advance at a meeting involving Dean, former attorney General John N. Mitchell and Jeb Stuart Magruder, former special assistant to the President.

If true, this put Dean in the position of conducting

the in-house investigation when he was actually one of the conspirators.

Then, this week, came even more damaging reports from Dean. The Washington Post reported that Jeb Stuart Magruder, former special assistant to the President, had told federal investigators privately a week ago that Dean and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell approved and helped plan the Watergate bugging.

Further, Magruder said, according to reliable sources, that Dean and Mitchell also arranged for payments to the seven convicted Watergate conspira-

tors to buy their silence and keep them from implicating Dean and Mitchell.

This caused Dean to issue a statement Thursday that he would not allow himself to be a "scapegoat" in the Watergate investigation. Associates of Dean also told The Post that Dean will acknowledge that he attended a meeting at which bugging plans were discussed but that he rejected the idea. These sources said Dean will also implicate other White House officials, including chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, as having ordered him to avoid linking the White House to the Watergate during his investigation last year.

Last month, for example, The Washington Post reported that prosecutors attempted to keep prospective Watergate witnesses away from the FBI because of Gray's action in turning over FBI files to Dean, according to Justice Department sources.

These sources said the prosecutors feared dissemination of the FBI information by Dean to the very people who were being investigated.

Also, the sources had indicated the Dean's presence when the 14 White House aides were being questioned by the FBI may have had a "chilling effect" on the aides.

Dean's alleged involvement in the Watergate case also involved covering up evidence, some sources said. And Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.), the Senate's Democratic whip, cited reports that Dean two days after the June 17 Watergate break-in, sent two aides to the Executive Office Building where a safe and desk used by Watergate conspirator Hunt were located.

According to Byrd, the safe and desk were opened and the contents, including papers and a gun, were removed. Byrd said Dean did not turn over the contents to the FBI until June 26.

Yet Dean, at a June 22 interview with the FBI, said he would have to check when the FBI asked him if he knew that Hunt had an office in the White House, according to Byrd.

Prodded by Byrd, Gray said at the hearings on his confirmation last month that Dean "probably" had lied when he said he would have to check to see if Hunt had a White House office.

In addition there were reports that Dean:

- Recommended that Liddy, then a White House aide, be hired in December, 1971, by the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Liddy then went on to direct the Watergate break-in team and was reportedly a coordinator for other political sabotage and espionage in the 1972 campaign.

- Apparently cleared McCord for his job as security coordinator for the re-election committee. This came from McCord in a sworn deposition in the civil suit that arose from the Watergate case.

- Turned over FBI reports to the re-election committee. This came after a former re-election committee employe said last month that within 48 hours of a supposedly confidential interview with FBI agents last year she was summoned by committee officials to explain her action. Gray also testified that he gave reports to Dean of three re-election committee campaign workers who had asked to be interviewed out of the hearing of committee lawyers.

- Gave FBI reports to aides who, in turn, gave them to alleged political saboteur Donald Segretti to prepare him for his grand jury testimony prior to the Watergate trial last January. Gray, at his confirmation hearings, acknowledged that Segretti may have seen the reports.

- Was asked for legal help by Watergate conspirator Hunt shortly after Hunt's arrest for the bugging of Democratic headquarters last June. Hunt reportedly

asked an unnamed intermediary to call Dean for help in obtaining legal counsel, according to federal investigators.

- Along with presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman, talked with FBI director Gray on at least 15 occasions prior to the election concerning leaks to the press on the Watergate case. Gray said he had been "called on the carpet" by Dean and Ehrlichman.

Dean's name has also surfaced concerning other controversial matters in recent months. Of major concern were reports that Dean last year received from the FBI a copy of a controversial memo from Dita Beard, lobbyist for International Telephone & Telegraph.

The memo eventually wound up in the hands of ITT, which attempted to discredit its authenticity. At issue was a potential scandal: Had ITT, as the memo indicated, offered substantial financial backing for the Republican national convention in exchange for favora-

ble treatment on an anti-trust matter pending against it?

Before becoming the President's counsel July 27, 1970, Dean had been associate deputy attorney general as liaison between the Justice Department and Congress for 17 months.

In the Justice Department, he also was the government's chief negotiator with anti-war leaders regarding demonstration permits, and is also believed to have played a role in the administration's efforts to crack down on radicals.

Before that, he served from 1967 to 1969 as associate director of the National Commission on Reform of Federal Criminal Law. In 1966-67, he served as chief minority counsel for the House Judiciary Committee, following six months at the Welch and Morgan law firm.

Dean holds a 1965 law degree from the Georgetown Law Center. He was graduated from the College of Wooster in Ohio in 1961 with a B.A. degree.



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John W. Dean's role in Watergate probe is reversed.