

Dean Tried Hiring Spies To Infiltrate Protests

BY SEYMOUR HERSH

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John W. Dean III, the former White House counsel, actively attempted to set up an undercover espionage and intelligence ring to infiltrate antiwar protest groups before the Democratic and Republican national conventions last year, government sources say.

The sources say that Dean summoned an official of the Interior department to his office in May 1972, two months before the Democratic convention in Miami Beach, and tried to recruit him to participate in or to direct an undercover network, saying there was plenty of money available.

The official, Kernith Tapman, who handled negotiations for the Interior department before the massive antiwar demonstrations in 1969 and 1970, acknowledged in a brief telephone interview that Dean had made the offer. Tapman refused to discuss the incident further, however.

Other sources familiar with the incident said, however, that Tapman was distressed at Dean's offer and rejected it out of hand. Investigators have not yet determined whether the infiltration program ever did get set up before the convention, the sources said.

THE REPORT of Dean's recruiting attempt was the first to link him to any direct involvement in any Republican spying operations that, by May of last year, had been set up elsewhere in the White House and in the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Dean had previously acknowledged participating — under orders, he maintains — in the cover-up of the break-in at the Watergate offices

of the Democrats on June 17, 1972.

Dean and Tapman began their association at the time of the antiwar demonstrations in 1969, the sources said. Dean was serving then as a Justice department official charged with coordinating the government's response to demonstrations. Tapman was assigned by his Interior department superiors to help arrange permits and other necessities for the demonstrators on government property.

Tapman has told associates that he was surprised at the involvement of Dean and the White House in undercover police work.

"He knew that there were legal and official means to get information on protests," one friend said, "and that there was no need to go outside of official channels."

SOURCES SAID that when Dean moved over to the White House in 1970, he continued to monitor student antiwar and radical activities, along with a small, unofficial White House force assigned to handle the student protest problem.

"When he went to the White House," the source added, "his principal job was not to advise the President legally, but rather it was to continue what he had been doing at Justice — keeping an eye on radical groups."

Others on the White House force by 1971, the sources said, were Egil Krogh Jr., the undersecretary of Transportation who resigned last week after disclosures about his role in the burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, and John J. Caulfield, a Treasury official who went on administrative leave today after the Los Angeles Times reported that he had tried

to put pressure on James W. McCord Jr., one of the Watergate break-in team, to keep quiet with a promise of executive clemency.

In other developments:

● Newsweek magazine quoted Dean as saying in this week quotes Dean as saying in an interview that President Nixon never asked him for a report on the Watergate case and that he never wrote one. He was quoted as saying he was "flabbergasted" when Nixon quoted his alleged report in a news conference, saying that it had concluded that no White House officials had been involved in the bugging of the Democratic headquarters.

● Time magazine, quoting a close associate of Dean, says in this week's editions that Dean and his wife, Maureen, had been working "into the nights" to gather evidence showing that the White House aide did not meet with the President between the Watergate arrests and Nixon's Aug. 29 statement clearing his aides. "That would make an outright lie of Nixon's press conference statement," Time magazine said, "unless someone above Dean has misled the President."

● Chief Judge John J. Sirica of U.S. District Court was expected to rule later today on whether copies of secret documents which Dean took from the White House before being fired on April 30 may be distributed to the grand jury and Senate Watergate investigating committee.

At a hearing this morning, Sirica initially ruled that both bodies were entitled to copies of the documents.

However, after the hearing, Asst. U. S. Atty. Earl J. Silbert informed Sirica that higher government officials—not identified—were objecting to dissemi-

nation of the documents because of their high security classification. The classification, according to Dean, who made his first public appearance today since first being mentioned in connection with the Watergate affair last August, is called "top-secret handled via commit channels."

The phraseology was not explained, and it was not immediately clear whether the word "commit" might have represented the initials of some type of governmental body. The prosecutors were attempting to find out the meaning of the classification in time for today's second hearing.

It was not clear whether Silbert's superiors were objecting to having copies of the documents made available to both the Senate and grand jury, or just to the Senate. Silbert mentioned in court today that since Dean first revealed the existence of the documents in a motion filed on May 4, the three prosecutors had obtained top-security clearances.