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Gray's 'Startling' Story About Dean

Nixon Aide 'Probably' Lied to FBI Agents, Senators Are Told

Associated Press

Washington

Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III conceded yesterday that White House counsel John W. Dean III probably lied to one of his agents during the Watergate investigation.

The disclosure came when Senator Robert Byrd (Dem.-W.Va.) asked Gray if Dean had lied to an FBI agent last June in saying he would have to check to see if Watergate defendant E. Howard Hunt had an office in the White House, when in fact, he knew he had one.

"After looking back and making a minute examination of the record, I would have to conclude that that's probably correct," said Gray, who is seeking confirmation as permanent FBI director after serving nearly 11 months as acting director.

Dean told the FBI agent during an interview with White House aide Charles W. Colson he would try to determine if Hunt had an office at the White House. That occurred only three days after he issued instructions to have a safe in Hunt's office opened and the contents, including a gun and some electronic equipment, be placed in his custody.

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On June 27, Dean turned the contents of Hunt's safe over to the FBI.

Hunt and six others face sentencing today for the

bugging and burglary of Democratic national headquarters.

Byrd told newsmen that Gray's admission is "a startling one, especially in view of the fact that he continued to provide Dean with raw facts from the FBI's files."

Byrd said it is "an amazing, incredible thing" that Gray would continue to provide FBI information to Dean, whom the West Virginia Democrat described as having an "element of ubiquity" in the Watergate investigation.

A statement issued by the

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White House press office said "Mr. Dean flatly denies that he ever misled, or as Senator Byrd suggests, lied to an agent of the FBI.

"Mr. Dean recalls that in June of 1972 as FBI agents were departing his office, he was asked whether or not they could visit Mr Hunt's office. He said he would check — the question, as Dean recalls, did not relate to whether Mr. Hunt ever



JOHN W. DEAN III
A White House denial

had an office in the EOB. (Executive Office Building).

"The reference to Mr. Dean," the White House statement went on, "is reprehensible, unfortunate, unfair and incorrect."

After further questioning by Senator John V. Tunney (Dem.-Calif.), Gray was again excused and the hearings were adjourned.

ROLE

Tunney zeroed in on Dean's role in the Watergate investigation and said Gray's disclosure that the White House counsel apparently lied to FBI agents last year "represents to me a quintessential point of the whole hearing process — the appearance of Dean."

In questioning Gray, Tunney said his nomination may hinge on Dean testifying and asked the FBI director if he would want Dean to appear before the committee.

"The President has to make that decision," said Gray. "I have no contribution to make to that kind of decision. That is one solely for the President."

Gray also told Tunney that

he had refused administration offers to help to gain Senate confirmation.

PIT

"I have to sit here in this pit and persuade the United States Senate myself," said Gray.

Tunney told Gray that his vote on the nomination is "not going to rest on your integrity. It would be on the basis of your independence from the White House."

Tunney told newsmen he believes Gray's nomination is in grave doubt.

"If we had to vote, Gray would not receive a sufficient number of votes," said Tunney. "He may get eight, but I am sure he would not get nine." Nine votes are necessary for confirmation by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

AIDES

Gray has maintained that he supplied the FBI data to Dean in his role as counsel to the President while Dean was conducting a separate Watergate investigation to determine if any White House aides were involved.

After questioning Gray for two hours, Byrd repeated earlier statements that he would not vote for him to be FBI director.

"I think that the image of the FBI has suffered, in view of all the developments which occurred during his acting directorship, and I think that the professionalism, morale and efficiency of the FBI have likewise suffered, as has public confidence in the FBI," Byrd said.

"There is too much evidence of political activity on the part of the acting director; there is too much evidence of subservience to the White House; there are too many unanswered questions with respect to the possible misuse of FBI files in connection with the Watergate investigation."

Byrd told Gray he found it "especially intriguing" that Gray would submit FBI files to Dean as late as October 12 when President Nixon told a news conference August 29 that he could say, on the basis of a complete investigation by Dean, that no one then on the White House staff was involved in the Watergate bugging.