

Nixon's Reply To Impeach Data

Washington

President Nixon responded to the House Judiciary Committee staff's massive collation of the evidence against him with a defense that focused on the argument that he did not authorize "hush-money" payments to the Watergate burglars.

The President told the committee, in a 242-page response prepared by his lawyers and released yesterday's exactly what he has told the American public for months:

That he first learned of the Watergate coverup on March 21, 1973; that as soon as he learned of it, he tried to ascertain the facts; that he then took steps to bring the facts to the proper authorities.

"The President had no knowledge of an attempt by the White House to coverup involvement in the Watergate affair," Mr. Nixon's official response to the Judiciary Committee stated.

The President's answer to

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the committee made no mention of his remark to his aides on June 30, 1972, just after the Watergate break-in, that he hoped "nothing" would surface publicly about the break-in that might aggravate the scandal.

It made no mention of the conversation he held on March 22, 1973, in which, according to the committee's collation, the President told his aides, "I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment, coverup or anything else if it'll save it—save the plan."

Nor did the President, through his lawyers, make note of the fact that the Ju-

diciary Committee had prepared transcripts of White House tape recordings that differed, often markedly and on crucial issues, from the official White House transcripts. The President based a number of the points in his defense on excerpts from now-disputed portions of the White House version of the tapes transcripts.

By focusing on the controversy on the "hush-money" payments, rather than giving the committee a point by point answer to the 243 "statements" in the committee's reports, the President and his lawyers were carrying out their strategy of trying to limit the area of the impeachment inquiry.

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