

Key Figures in Watergate Are Silent or Unavailable

NYTimes

APR 19 1973

White House Counsel Described as Alone but Confident as He Prepares to Face Senate and Grand Jury Inquiries

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 18— Like most of the central figures in the Watergate case, the White House counsel, John Dean 3d, was not to be found today.

In the scramble for defensive positions, however, and amid the sudden crumbling of old White House friendships, Mr. Dean was reliably described as alone but confident, prepared to implicate others if necessary.

In connection with both the Watergate break-in itself and the official investigation that Mr. Dean conducted for President Nixon last summer, Mr. Dean is preparing to face examination before a Senate committee and in a Federal grand jury. On both issues, Mr. Dean has intimated he can show his own innocence of wrongdoing and guide investigators to other members of the President's inner circle.

According to close friends of Mr. Dean, there never was a full, written report to the President on Mr. Dean's investigation. The same sources said that Mr. Dean never met with Mr. Nixon to talk about the Watergate case until last month, shortly before the President came upon "serious charges" and started the new investigation he reported yesterday.

Superiors Accused

The strong suggestion from Mr. Dean's allies was that the original findings in the case had been intercepted and doctored by superiors on the White House staff in such a way as to persuade the President, as he stated last August and after, that "no one in this Administration, presently employed, was involved."

A number of other men whose names keep recurring in accounts of the Watergate case appeared to be in Mr. Dean's position today—isolated, under suspicion, silent but nonetheless vaguely threatening to their old associates.

Charles W. Colson, formerly a special counsel to the President, took a lie detector test two weeks ago to certify that he had no forknowledge of the

not come to his office today, and his wife said she did not know where he was.

Gordon Strachan, who worked at the White House and the re-election committee, is now general counsel to the United States Information Agency. But his secretary said today he was not in the office and that she did not know where to find him.

Dwight L. Chapin, the President's former appointments secretary, left the White House earlier this year after it was reported he arranged to recruit and pay the head of an espionage effort against Democratic Presidential candidates last year. He now works in the marketing department of United Airlines. But at his office in Chicago, his secretary said today he was in New York with friends, and was unreachable.

Mardian in Arizona

Robert Mardian, a political coordinator of the Nixon campaign and before that an assistant, for internal security, to former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, now works for his family's construction company in Phoenix, Ariz. As often as he has been mentioned in the Watergate affair, he has denied all involvement and knowledge of the matter.

Maurice H. Stans, former Secretary of Commerce who still retains the title of campaign finance chairman and shows up regularly at the Nixon campaign headquarters, has consistently turned reporters' questions aside and says the first interview he gives will be to the Senate committee investigating the Watergate case.

Of all the figures being mentioned, Mr. Dean seems most clearly on the spot. Efforts have been made to link him to the Watergate burglary itself, as the man who recommended G. Gordon Liddy, a convicted conspirator, for his job at the re-election committee. Further, as the President's personal Watergate investigator who had access to everything the Federal Bureau of Investigation turned up, Mr. Dean knows as many details of the case as anyone.

And finally, after the President's implicit dismissal yesterday of Mr. Dean's investigative effort, he appears to be in a suddenly shaky position at the White House. Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, declined specifically yesterday to say that the President retains confidence in Mr. Dean.

All the same, friends intimated today that Mr. Dean, who views himself as the "man in the middle," will fight to prove himself innocent. He has not offered his resignation as White House counsel, and he does not expect to be asked for it.

Watergate plot—the first overt sign of continuing concern about guilt and possible re-crimination within the President's close circle of advisers.

Like Mr. Colson, who is now in private law practice here, many of the figures in the case have left the Government. But even those who have not are hard to find.

Magruder 'Missing'

Jeb Stuart Magruder, who moved from the White House staff to become deputy director of the Nixon re-election campaign last year, is now a planning officer at the Commerce Department. But he did