

Web Tightens Around Nixon Advisers

By Jack Anderson

The Watergate web is tightening around three of President Nixon's closest advisers—former Attorney General John Mitchell, former aide Jeb Magruder and White House counsel John Dean.

All three have protested their innocence, and the case against them is still largely circumstantial. But witnesses before the grand jury have given secret testimony, which darkens the cloud over the trio.

The case against them rests heavily upon Watergate wire-tapper James McCord's charge that the burglary-bugging operation was actually planned in Mitchell's Justice Department office by Mitchell, Magruder and Dean, with Watergate ringleader G. Gordon Liddy giving the briefing.

On April 2, we quoted from McCord's confidential initialed memo that "John Dean, Jeb Magruder, Gordon Liddy and John Mitchell in Feb. 1972 met in Mitchell's office at the department of Justice and held the first formal discussion of bugging and related operations."

The memo states that Liddy prepared huge four-foot-by-four-foot charts for the meeting. "The charts were brought in late one afternoon and left in (Liddy's) office on the 4th floor wrapped in brown paper," McCord related.

Liddy's former secretary, Silvia Panarites, has confirmed to the grand jury that a meeting was scheduled. "It was a meeting at the Justice Department," she testified, "among Mr. Liddy, Mr. Magruder and Mr. Mitchell."

Mysterious Package

"Now, Miss Panarites," asked Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald Campbell, "did there come a time when you observed a brown package in Mr. Liddy's office?"

"Yes, sir," she replied. She described the package as about four feet in dimension, an inch thick, wrapped in brown paper. "Mr. Liddy himself carried the package into the office . . ." she testified. "He did say that I was not to look in the package; that it was better for me not to know of its contents . . ."

The mysterious package was left in Liddy's office overnight, she said, so Liddy asked her to hide it in case "somebody should happen to walk in, it would not be seen . . . So I moved the bookcase and put the package behind the bookcase."

Another prosecutor, Seymour Glanzer, asked whether Liddy's removal of the package the next day was "related in your mind to this appointment he had at Justice?"

"I can't relate it to anything," she responded, "other

than the fact that he removed it himself."

Mitchell reiterated to us in a telephone conversation that he had no advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging. Magruder acknowledged attending the February, 1972, meeting but insisted the bugging had not been discussed. We couldn't reach Dean, but our White House sources say he has now admitted to his superiors that Liddy presented various "wild" bugging plans at the meeting.

"Gemstone" Papers

The most damaging grand jury testimony disputes Magruder's sworn statement that he knew nothing of the Watergate bugging. Another Liddy secretary, Sally Harmon, testified that she had typed up reports on the conversations of Democratic Party officials. She used secret stationery with the code word, "Gemstone," printed on top, she said.

She reported that the campaign committee's own printer had delivered the "Gemstone" stationery to Liddy's office and had cautioned her: "Mr. Liddy said no one is to see this."

After the arrest of the burglary-bugging squad at the Watergate, Magruder in a phone call from California instructed his assistant, Robert Reisner, to remove sensitive files from his office. One was

a blue folder, which Reisner testified he associated with Liddy.

"Now my memory is vague," he stated, "as to whether it said 'Source' or whether it said 'Memorandum from.' But it said that first, and then the second word was 'Gemstone.' It seemed to me that was from Mr. Liddy."

"Gemstone?" asked prosecutor Earl Silbert.

"That's right."

Reisner said he turned the "Gemstone" folder over to campaign official Robert Odle who later testified he returned it to Magruder without examining it.

Reisner also recalled that Magruder, in introducing Liddy to the staff in January, 1972, said: "This is Gordon Liddy, who is going to come to the staff as a lawyer, and Gordon Liddy also has other talents."

Commented Reisner: "(Magruder) was trying to make a joke about the fact that Mr. Liddy was . . . engaged in doing kinds of research activities." Afterwards, Reisner overheard enough around the office to "infer" that Liddy "was responsible for some sort of secret activity or research."

It would appear Magruder must have had more knowledge than he has admitted of Liddy's Watergate operation.