

How the Watergate Cover-Up Blew Up



Jack Anderson

THE ASTONISHING STORY can now be told how the Watergate cover-up suddenly tore apart at the stitches.

From the most competent sources inside the White House and the Justice Department, we have learned the fascinating details.

Our sources declare categorically that President Nixon had no advance knowledge of the Watergate break-in and bugging. From the first, former Attorney General John Mitchell and White House counsel John Dean also swore to him that they had no part in the illegal operation. It was well known around the White House, however, that Jeb Stuart Magruder was neck-deep in the scandal.

As No. 2 man on the campaign committee, he directed the activities of Watergate ringleader G. Gordon Liddy.

Liddy submitted regular reports to Magruder on the bugging operation under the code name, "Gemstone." Magruder also arranged for Liddy to draw cash out of the committee's safe.

★ ★ ★

AFTER the arrest of the Watergate wiretappers, an agitated Liddy immediately tried to contact Magruder in California. Later he returned to campaign headquarters and began stuffing his files into a shredder.

Over at the White House, meanwhile, Dean ordered two aides to clean out the files of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

Our sources state flatly that Dean used his authority to obstruct the FBI and to keep incriminating evidence away from the Justice Department.

One of the President's closest advisers,

John Ehrlichman, wanted to put out a statement acknowledging Magruder's role in the Watergate conspiracy. This was vigorously opposed by Clark MacGregor who succeeded Mitchell as campaign chairman.

A few presidential advisers, including Ehrlichman and Charles Colson, warned Mr. Nixon in February the Watergate decisions must have been approved by Mitchell and Dean. Mr. Nixon replied that both had denied any involvement and he asked for proof.

By mid-March, the President's faith in Dean began to waver.

★ ★ ★

COLSON and Ehrlichman put together information that (1) Dean had advance knowledge of the Watergate bugging; (2) Dean had ordered Hunt out of the country; and (3) Dean had authorized payments to the Watergate defendants to keep their mouths shut. On Friday, April 13, Ehrlichman confronted Dean with the charges.

That night, Dean put together some documents he had been saving, which indicated both H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman had knowledge of the Watergate cover-up. Next day, Dean took the documents to assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert and made accusations against Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell and Magruder.

Silbert called in Magruder and confronted him with Dean's revelations. This broke down Magruder who also confessed his role in the conspiracy.

The lid, which Mitchell and Dean had held on the Watergate scandal for ten months, had blown off.