

A Special Watergate Prosecutor

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — Elliot L. Richardson pledged today to name a special outside Watergate prosecutor and the White House issued a sweeping denial of any presidential involvement in the scandal or cover-up.

Richardson said he'll make the appointment once he is confirmed as attorney general. He said he has not yet found the right person to head the probe.

In Key Biscayne, Fla., where President Nixon is winding up a long weekend, Deputy Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren said:

"Any suggestion that the President was aware of the Watergate operation is untrue. Any suggestion that the President participated in any cover-up activities is untrue."

Dean Reports

The statement came in the wake of reports in Time and Newsweek magazines that ousted White House counsel John W. Dean III is prepared to testify that Nixon personally congratulated him last September for covering up administration involvement in Watergate.

The denial referred specifically to the Newsweek account.

Acknowledging worries over how the Watergate investigation would be pursued, Richardson said, "After much careful thought

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about how best to respond to these concerns, I have decided that I will, if confirmed, appoint a special prosecutor and give all the independence, authority, and staff support needed to carry out tasks entrusted to him."

'Report Direct'

With special emphasis, Richardson said the special prosecutor would report only to him as Attorney General. This seemed to imply that President Nixon would have no direct hand in the investigation.

Richardson, currently the Secretary of Defense, was chosen by Nixon last Monday to become the new Attorney General and take personal responsibility for the Watergate investigation.

"I would welcome, in addition, an expression by the Senate as a whole of its confidence in him," Richardson said.

In another development, a Senate committee investigating Watergate obtained a court order for public testimony by a Watergate principal.

Hunt Immunity

Federal Judge John J. Sirica, who presided at the January trial of seven original defendants in the burglary-bugging of Democratic National Headquarters, disclosed issuance of a grant of immunity for testimony at the Senate hearings by E. Howard Hunt.

Hunt, a former White House consultant who pleaded guilty to all charges, previously testified before a grand jury investigating the plot after Sirica issued an order exempting him from further prosecution.

A court spokesman said separate grants of immunity are necessary for testimony before different bodies.

Senate sources said that the Senate committee also had asked for immunity orders to compel testimony by Jeb S. Magruder, another White House aide; G. Gordon Liddy, convicted Watergate conspirator, and four other men who pleaded

guilty as participants in the plot.

Senate leaders Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) and Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) welcomed Richardson's announcement. Mansfield, in response to some calls for Senate action on the prosecutor before Richardson's nomination, said confirming Richardson first would "add more weight when he selects the prosecutor."

Time and Newsweek gave slightly different accounts, but both said Nixon's purported remarks came in a meeting among the President, Dean and another top White House aide.

Newsweek quoted Dean as saying Nixon was in the Oval Office with Dean and White House chief of staff H. R. "Bob" Haldeman when the President said: "Good job, John. Bob told me what a great job you've been doing."

Time's version said Nixon, Dean and the President's domestic-affairs adviser, John D. Ehrlichman, were present and that Nixon said: "John here tells me you've been doing fine work."

Wants Immunity

Neither magazine, in announcing the stories would be forthcoming, identified its source.

However, one legal source who has been close to the Watergate case said the "tidbits" Dean reportedly gave government investigators were used as bait in an effort to win the 34 year old lawyer immunity from prosecution.

Dean has told them he has other evidence, including White House documents, to substantiate his claims, the source said.

The source said the government has refused to grant Dean immunity in exchange for his testimony.

Fired by Nixon

Another observer said Dean, fired by Nixon a week ago, still may waive his right to the constitutional protection against self-incrimination even if he fails to win immunity.

"If he goes before the

(Senate Watergate) committee and creates a tremendous sensation by implicating everybody in the White House on national television," the lawyer said, "he'll be able to claim he could never get a fair trial because of all the pre-trial publicity."

In other weekend developments in the Watergate scandal:

• Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) said that, as a result of Watergate "We have a governmental crisis at hand." The presidency, he said, is "sort of adrift, like a ship with its sails torn by a storm and without a rudder."

Gurney, a member of the Senate Judiciary and Watergate committees, and Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) were interviewed on the CBS broadcast "Face the Nation."

Tunney, also a member of the Judiciary Committee, said Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. "has got to resign as vice chief of staff" of the Army following his appointment last week as White House chief of staff to replace Haldeman.

'Conflict of Interest'

"I can't imagine a situation where there is a greater conflict of interest," Tunney said, "than a man who has a mission-oriented job working for the Department of the Army and now is going to be sitting as chief of staff of the White House, where he is the filter for ideas and people and papers that reach the President."

• Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.), former GOP national chairman, said on ABC's "Issues and Answers" that the President's credibility has been damaged by Watergate.

• Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), speaking yesterday at the State University College in New Paltz, N.Y., said, "We ought to take very serious action if it turns out the President is implicated in this." But he said it was too early to consider impeachment proceedings.