

U.S. Attorney's Letter

Why Dean Wasn't Offered Immunity

Ex-Counsel 'At Center' Of Coverup

Associated Press

Washington

In a letter made public yesterday, federal prosecutors told John W. Dean III the reasons they are fighting his request for immunity in the Watergate case.

Dean, the ousted White House counsel, was at the center of a plot involving others to cover up the Watergate wiretapping, the letter released in court said.

The letter is the strongest public statement yet that Dean has serious evidence against others, but it didn't name them.

Dean reportedly is prepared to offer testimony damaging to former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Jeb Magruder.

The May 22 letter to Dean was introduced in connection with a request by Dean to postpone his testimony before the Watergate grand jury.

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"The evidence that has been gathered and is still being gathered establishes that you were at the center of a very profound kind of corruption," the letter said.

"Involved was your ex-

ploitation of a position of trust in order to foster a pervasive scheme to obstruct justice.

"Things that the FBI, the grand jury, and this office were striving to uncover about the implication of others in the Watergate matter were blocked and frustrated by your connivance and collaboration with others.

"Accordingly, we cannot allow you to trade your testimony about the culpability of others in return for dropping all charges against you. However, as you know there

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is a deep interest by this office and the grand jury in the full disclosure of your evidence concerning the guilt of others who should share the blame with you."

The letter was sent by U.S. Attorney Harold Titus and the three assistants who made up the original Watergate prosecuting team. Special prosecutor Archibald Cox has since taken over responsibility for the investigation, although the original prosecutors remain on the job, at least for the time being.

The letter rejected Dean's request for immunity from prosecution, and offered, instead to allow him to plead guilty to a single count of conspiracy to obstruct justice. The offer has been rescinded by Cox pending a review of all immunity and plea-bargaining decisions.

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica put off until today a ruling on Dean's request for immunity or a delay in testifying before the grand jury.

Sirica is also set to rule today whether to prevent radio and television coverage

of certain testimony before the Senate's Watergate hearings, and whether he has the authority to delay granting a request to give immunity for Senate testimony to Dean and former Nixon campaign deputy Jeb S. Magruder.

The Senate's hearings resume today and live broadcast coverage is planned.

Sirica's ruling on the immunity questions will determine whether Magruder and Dean would appear before the committee this week. Former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, the Nixon campaign finance director, already is scheduled to testify.

Dean was served Friday with a subpoena to testify at the grand jury, but his lawyer, Charles Shaffer, asked Sirica to quash the subpoena or grant Dean full or limited immunity.

The episode is the latest in a continuing tug-of-war between the Senate committee and federal prosecutors over Dean's testimony.

Shaffer said Dean would refuse to answer grand jury questions on grounds of possible self-incrimination unless he is granted immunity.

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