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Haldeman Denies Magruder Charge

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Washington

H. R. Haldeman's attorney denied yesterday that the former White House chief of staff had learned of the Watergate coverup plot in January at a meeting with Jeb Stuart Magruder.

The lawyer, John J. Wilson, said an appointment diary, in which Haldeman's secretary had noted everyone who went through his door, would show that he had not met with Magruder until February 14.

The session dealt with a government job for Magruder, Wilson asserted. According to Wilson, it was not until late in March, when President Nixon has said he reopened the Watergate investigation, that Magruder indicated a coverup had occurred.

Haldeman himself could not be reached for comment, but Wilson's statements on his behalf were essentially the same as those made under oath by the former presidential adviser in pre-trial testimony last month.

CONFLICT

They conflict with the sworn statements given Thursday to the Senate Watergate Committee by Magruder, who served as deputy director of the Nixon campaign organization.

Magruder told the Senators that he had sent full reports on plans for the espionage efforts to one of Haldeman's assistants, Gordon C. Strachan, in the months prior to the Watergate arrests on June 17.

"I had to assume," Magruder said at one point, "that since I communicated completely (on the wiretapping plot) that these communications were known to Mr. Haldeman to some extent."

DEPOSITION

Magruder cautioned that this was "strictly an assumption," and Haldeman rejected it entirely in his sworn deposition taken in connection with civil litigation arising from the scandal. It included this exchange:

"Q. Prior to June 17 of 1972, Mr. Haldeman, did you have any knowledge, personal or hearsay, of any plans to engage in a bugging attempt at the Democratic National Committee headquarters?"

"A. I did not."

The more serious issue involves the alleged meeting in January, which Magruder described in his testimony

Back Page Col. 1

From Page 1

as follows:

"I thought probably that this maybe was becoming scapegoat time, and maybe I was going to be the scapegoat, and so I went to Mr. Haldeman, and I said I just want you to know that this whole Watergate situation and the other activities was a concerted effort by a number of people, and so I went through a—literally—monologue on what had occurred."

This meeting took place

before Magruder's testimony at the Watergate trial in January, according to his version. He perjured himself by covering up the plot, and he testified at the Senate hearing that Haldeman had known he was going to lie.

Haldeman and Magruder agree that they talked over a job in the administration for Magruder. But Magruder says this discussion was part of the January meeting and Haldeman's lawyer, Wilson, says it took place on February 14.