

Haldeman Knew of Plot, Probers Say

Washington

An attorney for Gordon C. Strachan, the former White House aide, has told the Senate Watergate committee staff that his client forwarded information about the Watergate bugging plot to H. R. Haldeman before the operation was discovered a year ago yesterday, according to committee lawyers.

Haldeman, who resigned as the White House chief of staff in April, has denied under oath having any knowledge of the wiretapping operation at Democratic National Committee headquarters here before it was exposed by the arrest of five burglars in the party's Watergate offices.

John M. Bray, a Washington lawyer who is representing Strachan, could not be reached for comment on the report that his client was prepared to contradict Haldeman's sworn assertion.

MAGRUDER

Jeb Stuart Magruder, the former deputy director of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, told the Senate committee last week that he had kept Strachan informed of plans for the bugging operation and of its progress, as well as of later attempts to cover up White House and re-election committee involvement in the plot.

But Magruder told the senators he was not certain whether Strachan, who he said had also read transcripts of the overheard telephone conversations, had passed any of the information on to his superior, Haldeman, although that was Strachan's job as liaison.

There were these other developments in the unfolding Watergate drama:

- John W. Dean III, former counsel to the President, will tell the Senate committee when he testifies this week that it was Halde-

man who personally directed that a tap be placed on the office telephone of Lawrence F. O'Brien, the former Democratic national chairman, according to Time magazine.

In this week's issue, Time reports that Dean will also testify to his belief that Charles W. Colson, a former special counsel to President Nixon, had prior knowledge of the bugging. Colson has repeatedly denied having such knowledge.

- Newsweek magazine reports in its latest issue that L. Patrick Gray III, who resigned as acting director of the FBI in April, turned over confidential FBI files on Watergate to Dean after being assured that he was reporting directly to Mr. Nixon on the matter.

President Nixon announced last August 29 that, on the basis of an investigation by Dean, no one then employed by the White House or the re-election committee had been involved in Watergate. The White House later conceded that Dean had made no formal investigation.

- Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.), the committee's vice chairman, disclosed in a television interview yesterday that he had urged President Nixon in February "not to invoke the doctrine of executive privilege" to limit the testimony of present or former White House staff members on the Watergate affair.

- Lawyers for former Attorney General John N. Mitchell acknowledged that they plan to cite the prejudicial effect of publicity from his upcoming appearance before the Senate committee to counter any indictment that may result in connection with the Watergate bugging case.

Plato Cacheris, one of Mitchell's attorneys, said that although he did not expect Mitchell, the former Nixon campaign director, to

invoke the Fifth Amendment before the committee, the issue of pre-trial publicity "would have to be raised" in any subsequent Watergate trial.

Mitchell was indicted by a federal grand jury in New York City on May 10 in connection with a secret \$200,000 cash contribution to the Nixon re-election campaign by Robert L. Vesco, the New Jersey financier.

Magruder told the committee last Thursday that it was Mitchell who had given the final approval for the bugging plans and who had later helped to concoct the coverup story.

The Senate's investigating committee, headed by Sam

J. Ervin Jr. (Dem-N.C.) will meet in executive session today to prepare for Dean's public testimony, which is scheduled to begin tomorrow and is expected to be the most dramatic so far.

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