

Where They Stand in Watergate

Washington

One year after the burglary, the accepted definitions of "Watergate" have come to include: (1) a plot within President Nixon's re-election campaign to use criminal tactics against the Democratic opposition and (2) a perjured coverup among high presidential aides.

"Watergate" also describes an ongoing free-for-all in which one principal objective of numerous high-level participants is apparently to save the remains of their individual lives and reputations.

Underlying the daily drama is the old question of whether Mr. Nixon had any personal connection with the scandal.

The case is no longer just a challenge to detectives. It is also a practical riddle for the principals: Will or can any members of the old palace guard produce evidence against the President as they scramble and bargain for their own havens from punishment?

As Jeb Stuart Magruder, who served as deputy campaign director of Mr. Nixon's campaign organization, told the Senate Watergate committee last week, "Everyone now is basically on his own."

BROKEN

The case has been broken in the sense that the original plot has been confirmed and several participants have confessed to the coverup. But no confession has been so total as to exonerate others; and no decision to "take the consequences" has been so selfless as to exclude bargaining with the prosecutors for a reduced sentence in exchange for fresh evidence. If any one of the principals is to be believed, many of the others are apparently still lying.

What lies ahead is the sorting out of numerous conflicting details and the weighing of blame — first by the prosecutors who will decide which charges to

press, and finally by a jury, which must decide who was legally guilty.

LINEUP

The lineup among the one-time pillars of the Nixon administration — the charges from them and against them — is roughly as follows:

- John N. Mitchell — a former attorney general, the manager of two Nixon campaigns and the administration's flinty symbol of tough law enforcement, he has been accused by Magruder of approving the break-in as well as other espionage activities at a meeting in Key Biscayne, Fla., on March 20, 1972.

After months of angry press statements, and sworn testimony that he knew nothing of the raids, Mitchell now says that he met with the Watergate planners but vetoed their scheme.

He is prepared to admit that after the June 17 arrests he approved "support payments" — but not criminal "hush money" — to the five burglars and two lower-level conspirators who were sentenced to jail after the first Watergate trial last January.

ASSISTANT

In conversations with White House aides Mitchell has reportedly accused his accusers — notably Magruder, his former first assistant — of promoting the Watergate plan. Mitchell associates also relay his suspicions of Charles W. Colson, the former special counsel to Mr. Nixon.

Mitchell, meanwhile, has been indicted in New York for conspiring last year to block a federal investigation of Robert L. Vesco, financier and big contributor to the Nixon campaign.

- John W. Dean III — The boyish-looking former White House counsel has apparently lost his campaign for immunity from criminal prosecution, waged through the selective release of in-

side information to investigators and the press.

As the next witness to be heard before the Senate Watergate committee, he is still threatening to implicate the President and most of his top staff.

Dean is reportedly ready to say that Mr. Nixon took an active part in the coverup, once asked him how much it would cost to keep the convicted burglars silent and said that \$1 million for that purpose could easily be raised.

DEFIANT

A defiant and potentially lethal witness, Dean is also a favorite target: Mr. Nixon is said to have concluded last March that his onetime lawyer and personal Watergate investigator was "in the thing up to his eyebrows." Magruder charged Dean with helping plan the bugging, then the coverup and, last January, a coverup of the coverup.

- John D. Ehrlichman — Once the Czar of White House domestic policy, he has publicly quoted, and apparently accepted, the Magruder and Dean accounts that implicate Mitchell in the Watergate affair. He has also said that Dean hid the facts from the President.

But numerous accounts put Ehrlichman deep in the coverup. He is said, for example, to have tried to divert the FBI from an investigation of burglary funds from Mexico, to have approved secret fund-raising for other Watergate defendants and to have ordered the destruction of evidence in the case.

- H.R. Haldeman — the terse, crewcut former advertising man and master manager of the old Nixon staff will reportedly be charged by Dean with prior knowledge of the Watergate break-in.

ACCUSATIONS

Several others are accusing him of having had a

hand in the coverup — or trying to persuade the CIA to steer the FBI off the Wa-

tergate trail on the pretext of "national security," and of helping to distribute "hush money" to defendants.

- Maurice H. Stans — the fifth major target of the prosecution, the former Secretary of Commerce, who as chairman of the Nixon campaign's finance committee raised most of the \$50 million campaign budget last year, denied any knowledge of the bugging plot or the coverup.

But Magruder, following him to the Senate witness stand, said Mitchell "evidently told Mr. Stans" all about the Watergate plan when the first advance payments for it were made and again when the burglars got caught.

VOLUNTEER

Other suspects have worked their way off the prosecutors' primary target list by volunteering testimony. Magruder expects to be indicted on only one felony count, because he became a witness for the prosecution. Herbert W. Kalmbach, who raised funds on White House instructions, and L. Patrick Gray Jr., who was the interim FBI director, both hope to be treated lightly for their cooperation.

Charles W. Colson, long the political odd-job man in the White House, has denied direct involvement in Watergate but has told what he observed of the coverup, and does not expect to be indicted.

For all that help the Watergate story is less than a coherent whole. Yet it took most of a year and several chance breaks to get this far — past innumerable lies and carefully baited blind alleys.

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Lineup