

# Nixon Expected To Say He Was Misled by Aides

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President Nixon is expected to defend himself against increasing allegations of his involvement in the Watergate cover-up by saying he was misled by his former principal deputies, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, according to White House and other government sources.

Instead of broadly claiming noninvolvement, the sources said, the emerging White House position will acknowledge misjudgments on the President's part and indicate they resulted from misinformation and unauthorized action by Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

This represents a major shift in the President's position, expressed in his nationally televised speech on April 30, when Mr. Nixon described Haldeman and Ehrlichman as "two of the finest public servants" he had ever known.

Informed yesterday of the expected change in position of the President, John J. Wilson, attorney for Haldeman and Ehrlichman, said: "What's he (the President) been doing for us lately?" Wilson said he had not heard of any change in White House position and would have no comment on the information in The Washington Post story. He did, however, reassert the innocence of his clients.

The change in strategy is specifically designed to counter charges by former presidential counsel John W. Dean III that the President, Haldeman and Ehrlichman all knowingly participated in the White House cover-up of the Watergate bugging and other illegal intelligence-gathering operations, the sources said.

Some of Dean's charges already have been leaked to the public through investigators and associates, and he is scheduled to begin nationally televised testimony before the Senate select Watergate committee on Tuesday.

One reliable government source confirmed a report in Sunday's New York Times that Dean is expected to testify that, among other things, he was told by former White House aide Egil Krogh that the President approved the 1971 burglary into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

In his May 22 statement on the domes-

tic security programs of the White House, Mr. Nixon specifically denied advance knowledge of the Ellsberg burglary, although he authorized a White House investigation of the leaking of the Pentagon Papers. "It was not until the time of my own investigation (into the Watergate affair) that I learned of the break-in at the office of Mr. Ellsberg's psychiatrist," the President said in May.

Reflecting the President's new position, one White House source said yesterday: "If the Dean charges are too devastating, and there is no reason to think they won't be, the President plans to come forward and acknowledge overwhelming negligence on his part, but will still deny criminal knowledge. . . ."

Previously, White House sources said, the President had been expected to stand by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, who would blame Dean for the Watergate cover-up.

However, charges by Dean and others against Haldeman and Ehrlichman have convinced the President that he must abandon support of his former principal deputies.

"The charges and the evidence are too much (against Haldeman and Ehrlichman)" one high-level source in the executive branch said. "They've been cut down to nothing and the President can't stand with them (any longer)."

White House officials have asserted in recent weeks that they are sure the President is innocent of any crimes, though the tangled web of the Watergate and Mr. Nixon's close association with many of the central figures makes it difficult to prove.

J. Fred Buzhardt Jr. who came from the Defense Department in May to be special presidential counsel for Watergate matters, recently told a reporter: "Beyond the shadow of a doubt the Pres-

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Maryland Republicans are expected to clash in Baltimore tonight over the retention of Alexander Lankler as party chairman. Page A6.

From the day of the break-in, news digests prepared for President Nixon have covered the scandal in detail. Page A4.

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dent is innocent . . . I have strong feelings about this and we'll prove it."

Other White House officials say that the President feels not only he has to protect his own reputation but that of the office of President, and that he must avoid joining in extensive public debate with charges and counter charges.

White House sources said that the President would not explicitly accuse Haldeman and Ehrlichman of criminal activity. Rather, as one source suggested yesterday, the President "can make a statement—it can be done in a phrase by the press secretary—to leave the clear impression that they've been abandoned."

In his April 30 speech, Mr. Nixon did just that with Dean by praising Haldeman and Ehrlichman as "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know," and noting only briefly that Dean had "also resigned," thus making it clear Dean had been fired.

The President also similarly disassociated himself from former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who has been extensively implicated in Senate testimony thus far. The dissociation was effectively accomplished when Mitchell visited the White House in April and was not able to see the President personally. Instead he only saw Ehrlichman, a longtime foe of Mitchell's in administration power struggles.

Although Haldeman and Ehrlichman were Mr. Nixon's closest aides, cutting them off would not mean repudiating Nixon's first administration, the sources said.

"Thank God it's not



Henry Kissinger," one source said, referring to the White House belief that the heart of the first Nixon administration was the foreign policy initiative of Mr. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger.

The expected shift in the President's strategy also would entail preparing what White House sources described last week as an increasingly narrower "legal defense," designed solely to demonstrate that Mr. Nixon has not acted criminally in the Watergate affair.

The new defense abandons the previous White House position that the President was far removed from events leading to the Watergate bugging and subsequent cover-up, according to high-level sources in the White House and elsewhere in the executive branch.

Instead, the White House is expected to demonstrate that Haldeman and Ehrlichman constantly misconstrued the President's orders and requests.

One White House source explained the President's current position as follows: "It's a last-ditch effort, but one he is entitled to as a citizen. There is a presumption of innocence provided by the system. If there is a case against him, it is going to have to be proved."

White House sources said that the President is going to make few, if any, statements on Watergate and predicted that he would react publicly only to what one high-level source called an "extraordinary situation."

Such a situation is virtually assured of developing this week as Dean, the 34-year-old former presidential counsel, appears before the Senate's select Watergate investigating committee to give at least several days of

nationally televised testimony that is expected to touch on the President.

The sources described Mr. Nixon as alternately angry, depressed and feeling increasingly isolated and under siege from investigators. They reported that the President is still shaken by the departure of Haldeman and Ehrlichman, which has left him distrustful of others.

Even among those who are advising him on Watergate, the sources reported, Mr. Nixon has refused to fully discuss his own role in the case.

The sources described the President as extremely upset about Attorney General Elliott P. Richardson's recent comments that the evidence is "inconclusive" as to whether the President knew in advance about a 1971 burglary into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

In addition, the sources said that Mr. Nixon is disturbed at Richardson's public assertion that the Justice Department will aid the special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, in any legal clashes with the White House.

One White House official explained the situation as follows: "We are alone without a Justice Department or an FBI." Normally the Justice Department and FBI are responsive to the needs of the White House, but the sources said that the Watergate has created an atmosphere in which any assistance by those agencies would be viewed as another cover-up.

The allegations that have or will be made against Haldeman and Ehrlichman in a variety of forums include:

- Former CIA Director Richard M. Helms and CIA

deputy director Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters have testified in closed Senate hearings that Haldeman and Ehrlichman tried to persuade them to get the FBI to call off the investigation of the Mexican "laundered" money in the Watergate probe.

- Former Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III has reportedly told investigators that Ehrlichman was involved in urging Gray last year to destroy evidence taken from the White House safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr.

- Former White House aide David Young, according to government sources, is prepared to testify, if he gains immunity that Ehrlichman approved the Ellsberg burglary. In addition, the sources said Young has given prosecutors a copy of a memo Young said he sent to Ehrlichman outlining the illegal entry prior to the burglary on Sept. 3, 1971.

- Former Haldeman aide Gordon Strachan is prepared to testify that Haldeman received information on the illegal Watergate bugging prior to the June 17 arrests of five men in the Democrats' headquarters.

- Former deputy Nixon campaign manager Jeb Stuart Magruder testified last week before the Senate Watergate committee that he "assumed" that Haldeman knew about the Watergate operation in advance and its subsequent cover-up because all information had been passed along to Strachan, Haldeman's close political aide.

- President Nixon's former personal attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach, has told investigators that Ehrlichman approved the delivery of large sums of money to

the Watergate conspirators for their silence, according to reliable sources.

Finally, reliable sources have said that John Dean is expected to testify this week that all actions he took in the Watergate cover-up beginning last summer — actions detailed by Magruder in his testimony last week — were explicitly ordered by either Haldeman or Ehrlichman.

Justice Department and Senate sources also have said that Dean also will testify that he had about 35 conversations this year with the President about the cover-up, discussions Dean has told investigators occurred before the President announced that he knew of and was investigating a cover-up.

All the major Watergate personalities, including Dean, acknowledge that Dean was as heavily involved in the Watergate cover-up as anyone. At the same time he has been the target of some obvious White House leaks to discredit him.

In the heat of the numerous Watergate charges and countercharges, however, both Senate and Justice Department sources say that Dean has had some success in establishing his credibility with investigators.

In recent weeks, he has forced the White House to change its public position on Watergate matters three times.