

Justice Department Was Manipulated, Dean Says

Washington

The Justice Department was manipulated and pressured repeatedly to assist in a coverup of the Watergate affair, John W. Dean III told the Senate Watergate committee yesterday.

Dean said that whenever the federal investigation was getting too close to the White House, the calls went out from him or other top presidential aides to get the Justice Department or the FBI to lay off or ease up on certain aspects of the probe.

Initially, many of the calls went to then - Attorney General Richard Kleindienst and then - acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III. As time went on, Dean said, more and more of the calls were going to Henry E. Petersen, assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's criminal division.

Despite some damaging testimony by Dean about Gray and Kleindienst, it was Petersen who emerged from yesterday's hearing as a key

figure — however reluctant or unwilling — in the Watergate coverup.

Dean testified that Kleindienst was disliked by top White House aides John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman and often did not follow up on instructions given him by the White House. Gray was regarded by some at the White House as being too zealous in his pursuit of the Watergate investigation, Dean said.

But Petersen, according to Dean's account, was most often cooperative in handling White House requests during the coverup phase.

VISIT

Petersen, Dean said, first came into the picture two or three days after the Watergate arrests on June 17 of last year. Dean said he had gone to Kleindienst's office

to express his concern that the Watergate probe "could lead directly to the President."

Dean said he found Kleindienst "dismayed and angered that such a stupid thing" as the Watergate episode had occurred. Kleindienst, according to Dean,

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then said that Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, accompanied by Nixon campaign aide Powell Moore, had sought him out at the Burning Tree Country Club in Maryland the week-end of the arrests.

"He (Kleindienst) said he was incredulous when Liddy stated that (former attorney general) John Mitchell had instructed him (Liddy) to tell Kleindienst to get the men who had been arrested out of jail."

Dean said Kleindienst told him "that he cut Liddy off and told him he would not talk with him." Dean said he warned Kleindienst that if the investigation led directly to the White House, "I suspected the chances of reelecting the President would be severely damaged."

ENTRANCE

It was then, Dean said, that Kleindienst called for Petersen to come to his office. Petersen then came in, gave a status report of the Watergate investigation and then was told of Dean's 'concern' that the probe could lead into the White House, Dean said.

Petersen, Dean said, "was troubled by the case and the implications of it." A few minutes later, alone with Petersen, Dean said he had told Petersen that "I didn't think the White House could withstand a wide open investigation . . ."

Dean said he later told Ehrlichman "that I felt Petersen would handle the matter fairly and not pursue a wide open inquiry into ev-

erything the White House had been doing for four years." Dean said Petersen had given him "the impression . . . that he realized the problems a wide open investigation of the White House might create in an election year."

CONTACTS

After that initial meeting, Dean said, there were many more contacts with Petersen. In mid-August, Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy campaign manager, was to testify before the grand jury. (Magruder has since told the Watergate committee he committed perjury before the grand jury and later at the Watergate trial in January).

Because of concern from Haldeman, relayed through an aide, that Magruder's grand jury testimony would not hold up, Dean said he called Petersen to find out how Magruder had performed before the panel.

Petersen "called back and said he (Magruder) had made it through by the skin of his teeth."

This, Dean notes, was a key point in the probe, "because this meant that the investigation would not go beyond Liddy."

Petersen later made special arrangements for Charles W. Colson and other White House aides — Egil Krogh, Dwight Chapin, Gordon Strachan and David Young. Under this arrangement, Dean said, the witnesses would not go before the grand jury to be interrogated, but rather would go to the Justice Department where they would give sworn statements without their lawyers present "and later the prosecutors would read the statement to the grand jury."

Petersen also helped stifle an investigation into the alleged political espionage and sabotage activities of Donald Segretti, Dean said. Dean said that before Se-

gretti's grand jury appearance, he (Dean) told Petersen that Segretti was not involved in the Watergate incident but had performed "some campaign activities" for the White House under the direction of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr.

Dean said he also told Petersen that Segretti was being paid for his work by Herbert Kalmbach, the President's personal attorney, and that he had been recruited by White House aides Strachan and Chapin. If this information came out, Dean said he told Petersen, it "would obviously be quite embarrassing and could cause political problems during the waning weeks of the election."

Dean said Petersen answered that he "understood the problem" and later reported "that he did not believe it was necessary for the prosecutors" to question Segretti about those matters.

He said Petersen later told him that prosecutor Earl Silbert "had tried to avoid getting into this area" but that it had been touched on when "a grand juror had asked the question, despite the fact that the prosecutors had tried to gloss over it."

Washington Post