

Dean Says That's Not Possible

Washington

The White House, in a counter-attack against testimony by John W. Dean III that President Nixon was deeply enmeshed in the Watergate coverup, declared yesterday that Dean was the coverup "mastermind."

The White House also described former attorney general John Mitchell as Dean's "patron" and suggested that Mitchell was responsible for the intelligence gathering scheme that led to the Watergate break-in.

The counterattack — asserting that Dean had consistently misled the President about the scope of the Watergate conspiracy — was contained in a lengthy White House interpretation of the charges Dean had made before the Senate's Watergate investigating committee.

The summary, along with Dean's disclaimers of its theme, was read into the record of the Watergate hearings yesterday afternoon by Senator Daniel K. Inouye (Dem-Hawaii).

"There is no reason to doubt," the White House document contended, "that John Dean was the principal actor in the Watergate coverup, and that while other motivations may have played a part, he had a great interest in covering up for himself."

COVERUP

The White House analysis pictured Dean as "the most active participant" in a series of events intended to thwart the Watergate investigation and declared that, "throughout all of this, Mr. Dean was perfectly situated to mastermind and to carry out a coverup."

Dean, who was at the Senate committee witness table for the third day, interrupted the reading of the state-

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ment time after time to dispute its rationale and, in one instance, to assert flatly that it was "in no way conceivable" that he could have devised and carried out such a widespread plot.

The White House statement said the former White House legal counsel's "activity in the coverup also made him, perhaps unwittingly, the principal author of the political and constitutional crisis that Watergate now epitomizes."

STRATEGY

The document, prepared by J. Fred Buzhardt, the White House special counsel on Watergate, represented the current White House strategy for dealing with Dean's accusations. The White House has deferred making any official response to Dean's testimony.

"It would have been embarrassing to the President," the document said, "if the true facts (about Watergate) had become known shortly after June 17," the date of the Watergate break-in last year. But the document insisted that Mr. Nixon, "an immensely popular President, could easily have weathered" the political embarrassment had he only been fully informed as to its scope at the time.

Now, the document said, "the political problem has been magnified 1000-fold because the truth is coming to light so belatedly, because of insinuations that the White House was a party to the coverup and, above all, because the White House was led to say things about Watergate that have since been found to have been untrue.

"The added consequences," the White House paper said, "were John Dean's doing."

Inouye said that he was reading the White House summary — and that he would follow up today with

the 41 specific questions the White House submitted to be posed to Dean — because they constituted the "most appropriate" test of Dean's credibility.

The White House statements and questions, the Democratic senator said, "should substitute . . . for a cross-examination of Dean by the President of the United States."

Dean sat, leaning forward and staring at Inouye, as the senator read the document. The witness was, however, scarcely more ill at ease than he had been earlier this week as he calmly recited the allegations that form, at this point, the undocumented but explosive charge against the President.

When Inouye read from the White House summary that Dean was "the foundation of the proposition that the White House was not involved" in the Watergate case, the 34-year-old Dean interrupted to say that he would "draw to the attention of the senator the La Costa (Calif.) meeting and the events that transpired there."

Dean referred to his testimony that he had met at the California resort on February 10 and 11 with John C. then domestic advisor; Ehrlichman; H. R. Haldeman, then White House chief of staff, and Richard A. Moore, special counsel to the President, to plan a White House counter-offensive against the Senate investigation.

When the senator read the White House assertion that Mr. Nixon and others had continually pressed to make "the whole story" of Watergate public this year but that Dean had opposed doing so, Dean repeated his testimony that he had told Mr. Nixon he believed Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean "could be indicted" for obstructing justice.

So it went for more than an hour late in the after-

noon, with the committee listening to the White House account and Dean countering by recalling specific statements he had made before the committee earlier that, he kept insisting, explained how his version was accurate.

The White House analysis said that at Dean's meeting on March 21 with the President, Dean had presented a version of Watergate that was "laundered," but that still was hair-raising enough to Mr. Nixon that he "came out of his chair."

Dean said that "the President of the United States just doesn't come flying out of his chair" and that, to the contrary, when Dean sought to warn the President that Watergate was a "cancer growing on the presidency," Mr. Nixon "seemed disinterested."

According to the White House account, Dean was ordered to the presidential retreat at Camp David, Md., on March 23 to write a full report on the Watergate affair but failed because "it would have been impossible to write a believable report that would not have been self-indicting."

Dean replied that the President had never asked for such a report, but that Haldeman had. He said again that he had become persuaded that Haldeman and Ehrlichman were trying to make him a Watergate "scapegoat" and that he consequently withheld his report from them, but that "If the President had called me and asked me for that report, I would have sent it."

The White House position paper on Dean's testimony — which a presidential spokesman in San Clemente, Calif., said late yesterday had not been shown to Mr. Nixon — described Dean as a potential criminal defendant desperate to find immunity from prosecution by telling his tale to government investigators.

It said that Dean "decided

to strike out on his own to hunt for immunity for the long list of wrong he had committed," and that when the prosecutors failed to grant immunity to him he began leaking allegations to the media in "shrill efforts" to "save himself by striking out recklessly at others."

"If anyone has been on the receiving end of adverse publicity," Dean told the senators, "it's been this witness."

GURNEY

The White House attempt through the summary and the prepared questions, to dismantle Dean's version of the Watergate coverup burst into the public hearings after an exhaustive, three-hour interrogation of Dean by Senator Edward Gurney (Rep-Fla.).

Under close and consistently skeptical examination by Gurney, Dean conceded that when he had taken \$4850 from a campaign fund in his office safe to go on a honeymoon last October, leaving a personal check in the safe, he did not have the money in his bank account to cover the check.

The admission came after Gurney presented to Dean a copy of the statement the committee had obtained, under subpoena, from the National Savings and Trust Co. showing that Dean's account stood at \$1625.12 on the date in question, October 12.

As a consequence of Gurney's lengthy questioning the committee abandoned its plan to finish with Dean's testimony yesterday—chairman Sam Ervin (Dem-N.C.) and vice chairman Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.) have yet to ask any questions of Dean—and put off until July 10 calling Mitchell as the next witness.

The committee had hoped to call Mitchell today.

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