

Mitchell To Tell His Story

Senate Hearing Resumes After Week's Recess

By Lawrence Meyer
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Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, under indictment in federal court in New York and a target of the federal Watergate grand jury investigation here, is to begin telling his story to the Senate select Watergate committee today when its hearings resume after a week's recess.

Widespread but sketchy reports from sources close to the Senate committee indicated yesterday that Mitchell will testify that he did not approve the Watergate bugging operation, as some witnesses already alleged, but that he did know about the cover-up that followed the June 17, 1972, arrests of five men inside the Democratic National Committee's Watergate headquarters.

According to these reports and sources close to Mitchell, he also is not expected to implicate President Nixon in the Watergate affair but will link the President's former top two aides, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, to the cover-up operation.

In addition to what other Senate witnesses said about Mitchell, it is likely that he will be confronted with his own prior sworn testimony in other forums concerning his role in the re-election campaign of Richard Nixon, which he officially directed from April until July 1, 1972.

On March 15, 1972, in one of his last appearances before a congressional committee, Mitchell testified that as of that date and prior to March 1, he had had no campaign responsibilities.

The official record of the hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee notes that while Mitchell was be-

ing questioned on this point, there was some laughter from the spectators in the committee room.

The atmosphere may be somewhat different as Mitchell is questioned today
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*John N. Mitchell asks court to quash indictment against him in Vesco case.
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TESTIFY, From A1

about his campaign role. Several witnesses already have told the committee that Mitchell was routinely sent memos concerning the campaign several months before he resigned as Attorney General.

Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, with reference to this testimony by Mitchell that "there is a very definite possibility that perjury was committed before a Committee of the United States Senate by a member of the executive branch."

In addition, several witnesses have told the Senate committee that Mitchell attended meetings in his Justice Department office where the Watergate operation was planned.

Last Sept. 5, while testifying under oath in a deposition in connection with the Democratic Party's civil law suit against the Committee for the Re-election of the President, Mitchell was asked: "Was there ever any discussion at which you were present, or about which you heard when you were campaign director, concerning having any form of surveillance of the Democratic National Committee headquarters?"

"No, sir," Mitchell replied. "I can't imagine a less productive activity than that."

Mitchell also denied in that deposition having ever received any information, "written or oral, concerning conversations that had taken place at the Democratic National Committee headquarters."

Mitchell subsequently has said publicly that he did attend meetings at which the bugging operation was discussed, but that he never approved any of the plans. "They've always been cut off at such times," Mitchell said last April 20, "and I'd like to know who it was that kept bringing them back and back and back."

Mitchell, according to an associate, has told the Watergate federal grand

jury that he believes that former deputy Nixon campaign manager Jeb Stuart Magruder went over his head to the White House to have the bugging plans approved. Magruder, however, testified before the Senate committee that it was Mitchell who "signed off"—approved—the bugging operation at a meeting in Key Biscayne, Fla., on March 30, 1972. Magruder also testified

that Mitchell, when later shown the first fruits of the bugging operation, expressed his dissatisfaction with them. And it was Mitchell's angry dissatisfaction, expressed to Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, Magruder said, that caused Liddy to go back to the Watergate to improve the bugging apparatus early in the morning of June 17, when the five men were caught there.

Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans were indicted by a federal grand jury in New York on May 10 and charged with perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of international financier Robert L. Vesco, who also was indicted. Mitchell has insisted he is innocent of any wrongdoing in that case, and his lawyers tried unsuccessfully to block his Senate

appearance while the New York case was still pending.

William G. Hundley, one of Mitchell's lawyers, has said that Mitchell has no evidence implicating President Nixon in either the bugging or the cover-up of the Watergate affair. Mitchell reportedly told the committee staff during closed door testimony yesterday that he has never discussed the Watergate affair with Mr. Nixon.

Following Mitchell's appearance yesterday, chief committee counsel Samuel Dash declined to comment on what Mitchell had said. Mitchell declined to say whether his wife, Martha, would attend the hearings. Dash estimated that Mitchell's testimony would take one and a half days.

The hearings will be televised today by the American Broadcasting Company (WMAL-TV), beginning at 10 a.m.



By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

Mitchell has little to say to reporters after leaving meeting with lawyers of the Senate Watergate committee.