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**EHRlichman SAYS
HE BRIEFED NIXON
ON PLOT APRIL 14**

**Tells Senators It Was First
Thorough Report Given to
President on Watergate**

DISPUTES DEAN CHARGE

**Witness Suggests Cover-Up
Was Intended to Disguise
Involvement of Mitchell**

By **JAMES M. NAUGHTON**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 27 — John D. Ehrlichman, offering a detailed White House rationale for the Watergate cover-up, swore today that President Nixon did not get a thorough briefing on the Watergate conspiracy until April 14 this year.

The former Presidential assistant, in his fourth day-long appearance before the Senate Watergate committee, challenged head-on the charge by

*Excerpts from the testimony
will be found on Page 11.*

John W. Dean 3d that President Nixon had been personally involved in the cover-up effort.

Mr. Ehrlichman testified that he had "great difficulty believing" the account by Mr. Dean, the deposed White House legal counsel, of a March 21 meeting at which Mr. Dean says he warned Mr. Nixon that Watergate was "a cancer growing on the Presidency."

Protection of Mitchell

Furthermore, Mr. Ehrlichman outlined—in cryptic handwritten notes of his own investigation into Watergate and in his testimony this morning—a White House theory that the cover-up was intended to mask the involvement of John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, in the intelligence plan that culminated in the Watergate burglary.

He said that H. R. Haldeman, then the White House chief of staff, had asked him if it was possible "we are taking all this anguish just to protect John Mitchell."

Mr. Ehrlichman did not volunteer to the Senators any of his theories or conclusions about the conspiracy or the cover-up. His rebuttal of Mr. Dean, Mr. Mitchell and at least six other previous witnesses at the hearings emerged, bit by bit, under solicitous interrogation by Senator Edward J. Gurney, Republican of Florida, and somewhat more skeptical questioning by other committee members.

Concern Over Hunt

Moreover, the scribbled notes by Mr. Ehrlichman, which he explained in part today, contained a strong suggestion that concern over the Federal grand jury testimony of E. Howard Hunt Jr., a Watergate conspirator, had prompted Mr. Nixon's April 17 announcement of "serious" new charges in the Watergate case. The Senate committee did not explore this suggestion.

Mr. Ehrlichman confirmed to a reporter that his notes on

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an April 15 interview with Charles W. Colson, a former White House special counsel, reflected a recommendation by Mr. Colson that Mr. Nixon should publicly disclose "damaging evidence" so that a pending grand jury appearance by Hunt would be an "anti-Although today was Mr. Ehrlichman's fourth day before the seven Senators, their aides, and the television cameras in the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building, not until this morning did the committee focus in depth on Mr. Ehrlichman's knowledge of the Watergate case itself.

In reply to questions, Mr. Ehrlichman testified that he took over the White House inquiry into the Watergate case on March 30, that he interviewed a number of the principals, that he gave the President complete reports on April 14 and 15, and that the President immediately ordered him to pass the information on to Government investigators.

Mr. Ehrlichman said that the President told him on March 30 he was "satisfied that John Dean is in this so deeply that he simply cannot any longer have anything to do with it."

That conversation would have occurred nine days after the March 21 meeting at which Mr. Dean has said he unsuccessfully sought to persuade the President that the cover-up was unraveling and that it had to be ended.

Later Meeting Held

But Mr. Ehrlichman insisted today that he had been at a later March 21 meeting with the President, Mr. Dean and Mr. Haldeman and that the President had given no indication that he had been fully briefed on Watergate by Mr. Dean.

Nor, he said, was there any such indication at a meeting the next day that included Mr. Mitchell.

Senator Gurney asked Mr. Ehrlichman, "Did not the President say at any of these meetings, 'Now listen, fellows, here I have heard all about this from John Dean—what gives here?'" "Senator," replied the placid witness, "I have great difficulty in believing that the President was told what Mr. Dean says he was told because of the President's approach."

He added that the two meetings had focused almost entirely on the thorny legal issues involved in the forthcoming Senate and grand jury investigations of Watergate and the position the White House ought

to take on the availability of White House aides as witnesses.

Mr. Dean testified last month that Mr. Nixon told him early this year to report to him directly on Watergate matters because Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman were "principals" in the case.

But Senator Gurney elicited from Mr. Ehrlichman today the explanation that Mr. Nixon had not meant to suggest that the two senior White House officials had been implicated in the conspiracy or its cover-up.

To the contrary, Mr. Ehrlichman said, the President merely meant that he expected Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman to become "test cases, so to speak," on the issue of testimony by Presidential assistants before a Congressional committee.

"We were principals on the question of the availability of assistants to testify," Mr. Ehrlichman said.

He said that when he took on the assignment of determining in April whether there was any White House involvement in the cover-up, he interviewed 10 key individuals.

On April 5, Mr. Ehrlichman contended, he learned for the first time of the meetings in early 1972 at which the political intelligence plans of G. Gordon Liddy, another Watergate conspirator, were hatched and trimmed to fit a \$250,000 budget.

He said that the information had been given to him by Paul L. O'Brien, one of the attorneys for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, on the basis of Mr. O'Brien's own inquiries and first-hand information about the break-in and cover-up.

Mr. O'Brien "brought me a whole new picture of this whole matter," he said, including the following elements:

¶That the plan to bug the Democratic party offices in the Watergate complex was said by Jeb Stuart Magruder, the deputy campaign director, to have been approved by Mr. Mitchell — a charge that Mr. Mitchell has denied.

¶That Hunt supervised another intelligence operation that obtained information from agents planted in the headquarters of Democratic Presidential contenders.

¶That Mr. Magruder had warned Mr. O'Brien that the scandal could lead to the President. Mr. Ehrlichman said this was based on a comment allegedly made by Gordon C. Strachan, an aide to Mr. Haldeman, that "the President wants this project [the bugging] to go on."

See also Kneeland, NYTimes this date

*Ehrlichman notes indicate plan to
limit Hunt's part (D. E. Kneeland)*