

A New Question On Nixon' Actions

Washington

President Nixon's statement Wednesday night that he learned last March 21 that hush up money had been paid to the Watergate burglars has raised new questions about his actions after learning of the cover-up.

Federal law requires that knowledge of the commission of a felony be reported to the appropriate authorities, according to legal experts.

Mr. Nixon did not report the statement by John W. Dean III, then White House counsel, to federal prosecutors who were then investigating the case, but ordered his own aides — who are now charged in the coverup — to find out the facts.

Mr. Nixon made the disclosure in the course of explaining on national television his part in the White House meeting of March 21 with Dean and H.R. Halde- man, then White House chief of staff.

Dean, the President said, "Told me that payments had been made to the defendants for the purpose of keeping them quiet, not simply for their defense." Previously, he had said only in a general way that he learned in the

March 21 meeting of the White House coverup of the burglary.

Yesterday, in the daily White House news briefing, Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary, was asked why the President had not made the fact public earlier and whether Mr. Nixon might have been in violation of federal law for not reporting Dean's statement to federal prosecutors.

Warren declined to expand on what Mr. Nixon said in his news conference.

Title 18, Section 4 of the Federal Criminal Code, entitled misprison of felony, says: "Whoever, having knowledge of the actual commission of a felony cognizable by a court of the United States, conceals and does not as soon as possible make known the same to some judge or other person in civil or military authority under the United States, shall be fined not more than \$500 or imprisoned not more than three years, or both."

Legal experts say this law has been the subject of various interpretations by the courts and there are questions as to whether it would apply to the President, who is the chief civil authority in the country.

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