

SFC
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Nixon Reveals He Considered Payoffs

Washington

President Nixon conceded for the first time last night that at his March 21, 1973, meeting with John W. Dean III, he had openly considered ordering payments to one of the Watergate conspirators, E. Howard Hunt Jr., to prevent Hunt from disclosing "sensitive national security matters."

But, by the end of that meeting, Mr. Nixon said he had plainly rejected the idea of hush money.

"In the course of considering it — and of 'just thinking out loud' as I put it at one point — I several times suggested that meeting Hunt's demands might be necessary," the President said in his nationally televised address.

According to the conspiracy indictment brought by a Watergate grand jury last March 1, arrangements for the delivery of \$75,000 to Hunt's lawyer were made shortly after the President's meeting with Dean.

The "national security matters" to which the President referred apparently concerned the fact that Hunt was a member of the White House unit known as the "Plumbers" and had participated in the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist in 1971.

In his fullest account to date of the controversial March 21 meeting, Mr. Nixon contradicted in part the testimony of Dean and the former White House chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, who entered the meeting some time after the discussion between Dean and the Presi-



E. HOWARD HUNT JR.
One of the 'Plumbers'

dent had started.

It was at that meeting, according to both the President and Dean, that Dean gave the President the first detailed description of how the Watergate burglary had come about.

Mr. Nixon said that after considering the "option" of paying off Hunt he "traced through where that would lead."

"The money could be raised. But money demands would lead inescapably to clemency demands, and clemency could not be granted," Mr. Nixon said, recalling his conversation.

Then, apparently quoting directly from the tape recordings of that meeting, Mr. Nixon declared:

"I said, 'It is wrong, that's for sure,' I pointed out: 'But in the end, we are going to be bled to death. And, in the

end, it is all going to come out anyway. Then you get the worst of both worlds. We are going to lose, and people are going to . . .'

"And look like dopes," said Haldeman.

"And, in effect," I added. 'Look like a coverup so that we can't do.'"

In testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, Dean said there were discussions with the President of possible hush money at meetings on both March 13 and March 21. Subsequently, according to investigative sources, Dean acknowledged that the entire discussion had probably been on March 21.

Dean said the President had implied that the payments should be made and had given no indication that he did not approve of them.

Haldeman testified that he had not been in the meeting when the payments had been discussed — a recollection apparently contradicted by the tapes — but that he had heard the President reject making payments on a tape of the conversation between Dean and Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Nixon said last night that he recognized that "this tape of March 21 is one in which different meanings could be read by different people."

"But," the President contended, "by the end of the meeting, as the tape shows, my decision was to convene a new grand jury — and to send everyone before the grand jury with instructions to testify."

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