

White House Attack on

Charge of Attempted Blackmail

Dean

Washington

The White House accused John W. Dean III yesterday of attempting to blackmail President Nixon in an effort to gain immunity from prosecution.

Continuing an assault on the credibility of Dean that began Monday night when Mr. Nixon made his nationally televised speech, James D. St. Clair, the President's special counsel, also suggested in a 50-page legal brief that Dean had repeatedly perjured himself in sworn testimony.

Some White House aides contended that seven or eight specific examples of lying were evident from comparing the White House transcripts of Watergate conversations with what Dean told the Senate Watergate committee. His testimony before that committee was most damaging to the President.

One source said it is possible that the White House will try to persuade Leon Jaworski, the special Watergate prosecutor, to prosecute Dean for perjury.

The blackmail charge against Dean, the former White House counsel, had never been made publicly before now.

St. Clair said in his brief that on April 27, 1973, Henry E. Petersen, the assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, "reported to the President that Dean's lawyer was threatening that, unless Dean got immunity, 'we will bring the President in — not in this case (the coverup) but in other things.'"

According to the transcript, Mr. Nixon replied:

"All right. We have the immunity problem resolved. Do it (Grant immunity to Dean) if you need to but I am telling you — there ain't going to be any blackmail."

In fact, Dean was never granted full immunity. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice and is still awaiting sentencing, while cooperating with the prosecution.

Robert C. McCandless, who was Dean's lawyer at the time, flatly denied that he had ever communicated such a threat to anyone, and threatened to bring the matter before the District of Columbia Bar Association. He also said he is confident that Charles Shaffer, another Dean attorney, had never made any threat of blackmail.

St. Clair's brief also pointed up a number of contradictions between Dean's testimony and the White House transcripts, without describing these as perjury. That was left to other aides, who spoke with the understanding that they would not be named.

For example, St. Clair quoted from the transcript of a meeting on March 22, 1973, in which Mr. Nixon told Dean, "I want a written

report" of Dean's investigation of the coverup. And he quoted Dean's testimony to the Watergate committee, in which Dean said:

"He (the President) never at anytime asked me to write a report, and it wasn't

until after I had arrived at Camp David that I received a call from (H.R.) Halde- man asking me to write the report up."

One ranking White House official said that "the highest levels" are now con-

vinced that it could be shown that "Dean is a liar on a grand scale," and that "we intend to demand to be shown why he should not be prosecuted forthwith."

Nothing in the transcripts, St. Clair said, in any way

supports Dean's contentions that Mr. Nixon knew of the coverup before the March 21 meeting; indeed, said St. Clair, there is a good deal of material that rebuts Dean.

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