

# Magruder Suspects Nixon Role

By Ronald J. Ostrow  
Los Angeles Times

Convicted Watergate conspirator Jeb Stuart Magruder said he suspects that President Nixon demanded and received the full story of the Watergate break-in immediately after it occurred and then kept "in close personal touch" with the cover-up.

Magruder, deputy director of Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign, who was sentenced to a minimum of 10 months imprisonment Tuesday for his role in planning and concealing the break-in, says he based his suspicion on "my knowledge of how the White House operated."

He makes the comments in his soon-to-be-published book, "An American Life: One Man's Road to Watergate."

Gerald L. Warren, White House deputy press secretary, said Thursday in response to Magruder's statement that Mr. Nixon has repeatedly said he first learned of the cover-up on March 21, 1973—nine months after the break-in.

Magruder writes that for-

mer Attorney General John N. Mitchell and White House former chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman possibly kept the truth about the operation from Mr. Nixon "either to shield him from involvement or out of fear of his wrath."

He adds, however, "I think it much more likely that he would demand the truth and they would provide it."

Magruder told the Senate Watergate committee last June 14 that he had "no knowledge of any input from the President" on the cover-up.

Magruder also expands in the book on Haldeman's alleged early knowledge of the cover-up, which Haldeman has denied.

Magruder tells of a January, 1973, meeting with Haldeman where Magruder says he reported the planning of the break-in, the cover-up and the perjury to keep it concealed.

"Haldeman made one unexpected and interesting comment," Magruder writes. "He said that, in retrospect, it would have been better if they'd let Mitchell take the

blame for the break-in back in June, when it occurred. That way, he noted, no cover-up would have been necessary."

Frank Strickler, Haldeman's attorney, noted Thursday that Haldeman's White House appointment logs show he held no meeting with Magruder in January, 1973, and that in a subsequent telephone conversation with a Haldeman aide, Lawrence Higby, Magruder denied that he could implicate Haldeman.

That telephone conversation was recorded, and there is reference to the recording in the edited White House transcripts of Mr. Nixon's Watergate conversations.

In an April 14, 1973, meeting with Mr. Nixon and Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, then a presidential aide, said of the recordings, according to the transcript: "Higby handled it so well that Magruder has closed all his doors now with this tape"

The President asked: "What good will that do, John?"

Ehrlichman: "Sir, it beats the socks off him if he ever gets off the reservation."

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