

Mass of Impeach Evidence Released

Stage Set for Decision

Washington

Thousands of pages of documentary impeachment evidence, but not the legal case against the President, were published by the House Judiciary Committee yesterday.

They scrupulously draw no conclusions, point toward no possible final action and contain no single startling disclosure that would either vindicate the President or seal the verdict against him.

As the raw material for a momentous case, they set the stage for the decision to come. That case is, however, sharpened by the sheer volume and diversity of the documents now made public.

Grand Jury and Senate testimony, memos and logs, scrawled notes in the President's hand, diaries and Dictabelt material, previously unpublished transcripts — all are meticulously presented without a trace of opinion or judgment.

In stark chronological fashion, often day by day from 1971 to 1973, the committee has catalogued the complicated efforts of the President and his aides to contain their increasingly serious problems. The result is the clearest, most coherent picture yet of how an intelligence-gathering plan grew into illegal activities and finally to a desperate attempt to cover up the case.

The new material, contained in seven bulky volumes covering 3888 pages (an eighth volume giving, in another 248 pages, the President's defense before the committee) makes these major new disclosures:

- That on March 17, 1973, four days before the President has said publicly he first learned of the Watergate coverup, Mr. Nixon said he heard from John Dean that the involvement

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of others could lead to H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and thus to the President himself. At that time, according to the President, Jeb S. Magruder was putting the heat on.

"We've got to cut that off," the President said. "We can't have that go to Haldeman."

There were problems looking to the future, the President went on, because Magruder could bring it to Haldeman and Haldeman could bring it to the President. "We've got to cut that back," Mr. Nixon said. "That ought to be cut off."

The tape of that conversation was subpoenaed by the committee, but the President refused to comply. However, the committee did receive a tape of a June 4, 1973 conversation between Mr. Nixon and Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler in which the President recounts the earlier meeting with Dean.

- That 11 days after the Watergate break-in the nation's two most secretive agencies — the CIA and FBI — were locked in a struggle over how far the CIA should go in helping to unravel the crime.

The committee published a memorandum from former CIA Director Richard Helms that places Helms in a more ambiguous position than has previously been realized.

"In short," Helms wrote to an aide about the Watergate case, "it is up to the FBI to lay some cards on the table. Otherwise, we are unable to be of help."

The committee also published documents from a secretary's notes showing that John Ehrlichman instructed the CIA to give E. Howard Hunt "carte blanche" and said Hunt would be working on special matters for the President. Ehrlichman has said he cannot recall this.

- That 13 days after the Watergate break-in Mr. Nixon knew that he had "at least a potential problem.

"There's always the risk," the President told Haldeman, that more knowledge of White House involvement would emerge.

"As of now, there is no problem there," Haldeman said. "As of any moment in the future there is at least a potential problem."

Mr. Nixon replied: "Well, I'd cut the loss fast. I'd cut it fast. If we're going to do it, I'd cut it fast. That's my view generally speaking." The conversation occurred on June 30, 1972.

- That the evidence indicates the President and his aides sought as much to construct a protective shield for themselves as to make public disclosures after learning

of the coverup in March, 1973.

The documents show that

from March 22 to April 30, 1973, intensive efforts were made to keep the scandal

clear from the President at same time Mr. Nixon was vowing that his own investigation would stop at nothing in revealing all the facts.

Previously unpublished transcripts of secretly recorded conversations between Ehrlichman and John Mitchell, and Magruder and Lawrence Higby, a Haldeman aide, show how the White House struggled to keep the case from touching the Oval Office.

Yesterday's committee publication covers only Watergate and its aftermath. It does not deal with other critical areas of congressional investigation — the President's income taxes, the ITT and milk fund cases, domestic surveillance and dirty tricks, abuse of the Internal Revenue Service or of the secret bombing of Cambodia.

That material probably will be released early next week.

A central part of the Watergate evidence released yesterday deals with the events after the June 17, 1972, break-in. Although no conclusions or interpretations are offered, the man-

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ner in which the evidence is laid out suggests a pattern of activity designed to stall investigative efforts and to cut losses.

It seems clear that the committee is looking at the case in its entirety, and not at isolated questions about specific events. For example, two volumes covering the period from June 20, 1972, to March 22, 1973, show an interlocking relationship in White House actions ranging from the payment of about \$450,000 in campaign money for Watergate conspirators to the critical Nixon-Dean meetings.

The summation of evidence includes such diverse matters as the efforts of the White House to get jobs for Magruder and political saboteur Donald Segretti and attempts to thwart the Senate Watergate committee investigation.

Yesterday's evidence came in four separate segments. The first section deals with the events of 1971 when the Nixon Administration began planning security and a covert intelligence operation, leading up to the Watergate break-in.

Part two concerns the events following the break-in and focuses on the FBI-CIA activities in connection with the growing scandal. The third section explores the question of hush money payments and the coverup, while the last addresses a vital impeachment question: Did the President conduct an investigation aimed at exposing the Watergate crime, or did he himself participate in its coverup?

Another section — and by far the slimmest — gives the President's defense of 'wrong-doing as presented to the committee by his lawyer, James St. Clair.

The defense is based largely on a continued and determined effort to discredit the testimony of Mr. Nixon's principle accuser, John Dean.

Previously secret grand jury testimony of Dean was submitted to the committee in an effort to show that Dean lied to the President about his conversations concerning a \$75,000 payoff to Hunt.

The committee evidence also includes much material that may turn out to be trivial and insignificant, even if much of it is intriguing.

One such example comes from a notation the President made on a sheet of legal paper April 15, 1973.

One one side is written, in his hand, "Gray's document." Facing it, also in his writing is the sentence: "I'm not going to lie for Ehrlichman." ↻↻↻?

Like everything else released this comes without comment or explanation.

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