

Nixon Said Magruder Was 'to Lie'

By George Lardner Jr.,
Washington Post Staff Writer

Former President Nixon said on a subpoenaed White House tape recording that his former campaign deputy, Jeb Stuart Magruder, was "supposed to lie like hell" before the Watergate grand jury.

The transcript of an April 25, 1973, conversation prepared for the Watergate cover-up trial shows that Mr. Nixon made the remark in a conversation with then-White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, according to informed sources.

CBS News correspondent Fred Graham first reported the exchange in a Monday night broadcast. The Washington Post confirmed it yesterday from several sources.

Magruder, who has since pleaded guilty to conspiring to obstruct justice in the Watergate scandal, already had started testifying before the grand jury when the Nixon-Haldeman conversation took place.

The transcript, sources confirmed, showed that Haldeman brought up Magruder's name during a discussion of the problems facing the White House at the time.

Mr. Nixon was quoted as

saying, "Magruder is supposed to lie like hell."

"Yeah," Haldeman was said to have replied. "But I'm not sure he is now."

A spokesman for Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski refused to comment on the reported exchange. The transcript of the April 25 meeting, along with those of some 32 other subpoenaed White House conversations, was supplied to lawyers for all six defendants in preparation for the cover-up trial.

During the April 25 meeting, sources said, Mr. Nixon told Haldeman to take care that nobody knew of the secret White House taping system that recorded the President's conversations.

CBS reported that among those who were to be kept from the secret was former White House domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman.

Mr. Nixon was told as early as April 8, 1973, that Magruder was starting to buckle under the pressure of revelations about the scandal and that he might start telling government prosecutors what he knew of it.

White House transcripts that have been previously released also show that by April 14, in presidential meetings with Haldeman and Ehrlichman that took most of the day, the subject of Magruder's testimony was a major concern.

Even as Haldeman and Ehrlichman were attempting to reach Magruder on April 14 to discuss his testimony with him, Magruder was meeting with the prosecutors to answer their questions.