

Nixon-Colson 'Hush Money' Talk Denied

Washington

Richard Nixon's lawyers said last night the former president never discussed paying "hush money" to the Watergate burglars with an aide the week the accused men were to go on trial for the June 17, 1972, break-in at the Democratic headquarters in Washington.

Ending their silence on the Watergate case, Nixon lawyers from San Clemente denied a story in Sunday's Washington Post claiming that the new transcripts of White House tapes revealed the hush money discussion between Nixon and Charles Colson, then the special White House counsel.

Colson said earlier the discussion never took place.

Nixon lawyers said that when Watergate prosecutors prepared the original transcript of the Jan. 8, 1973, Nixon-Colson meeting, it contained a reference to "hush money" payments to the burglars. But subsequent corrections by the prosecutors resulted in the term not being used in the transcript, they said.

"The statement is false," Nixon lawyer Herbert J. Miller said in a letter to the Post.

The transcript printed in the Post showed the two discussing hush money payments. This was a full 2½ months before the subject came up in another Watergate tape on March 21 — when John Dean told Nixon there was a "cancer growing on the presidency."

There have been reports that the new transcripts were acquired several months ago by David Frost in preparation for his television interviews with Nixon. The first of the interviews, on Watergate, will be broadcast tomorrow night.