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Watergate Bjt # 460

By JOHN CALDWICK

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON AP - The White House Monday denied that presidential counsel John W. Dean III had prior knowledge of the Watergate bugging incident and quoted President Nixon as voicing "absolute and total confidence" in Dean. //

The statement was issued at Key Biscayne, Fla., where Nixon was staying.

At the Capitol, the Senate's special Watergate investigating committee was urged by Republican Leader Hugh Scott to hold public hearings as quickly as possible.

"We should have the full story," Scott told newsmen. He said last week Nixon had authorized him to say that the White House had nothing to conceal.

Scott's comments were made shortly before a closed meeting of the committee set up by the Senate to investigate the bugging of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex and other alleged political espionage and sabotage in last year's presidential campaign.

White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said the President telephoned Dean in Washington during the morning because of what Ziegler called very extraordinary and serious charges leveled against Dean. //

He was referring to a report by the Los Angeles Times that James W. McCord, jr., one of the convicted Watergate defendants, had told a Senate investigator that Dean and Jeb Stuart Magruder, a former presidential assistant and campaign official, had prior knowledge of the Watergate incident last June.

Ziegler said that, based on Nixon's conversation, "I will again deny any prior knowledge on the part of Mr. Dean."

When asked about Magruder, Ziegler said "I'm not prepared to speak

for those who are not on the White House staff." He noted that Magruder has denied having any advance knowledge of the affair.

McCord met Friday and Saturday with Samuel Dash, chief counsel of the Senate panel. Dash told a news conference Sunday that McCord had named others who were involved, but Dash declined to say who they were.

McCord, encountered on a Washington street Monday by a Star-News reporter, said that published accounts of what he had told the Senate aides were correct. He would not elaborate. ←

McCord apparently was referring to the Los Angeles Times reports.

Dash said that McCord, an ex-FBI and CIA agent who was security director of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, has agreed to continue to meet with him and tell all he knows about the Watergate affair.

Scott said anything made available to the investigating committee's Democratic majority should be made equally available to the Republican minority "so we can make a judgment" on the fairness of the probe.

Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield, asked by newsmen about the Watergate bugging, said "my personal feeling is that the President very likely didn't know what was going on."

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(DEAN)

BY DISCZYNE (UPI) -- PRESIDENT NIXON MONDAY EXPRESSED "ABSOLUTE TOTAL CONFIDENCE" IN WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL JOHN W. DEAN III, WHO THE LOS ANGELES TIMES SAID HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED BY CONVICTED WATERGATE OPERATOR JAMES ACCORD AS HAVING BEEN INVOLVED IN THE BUGGING OF DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY RONALD ZIEGLER SAID NIXON CALLED DEAN IN WASHINGTON TO "DISCUSS THE STORY WITH HIM."

FOLLOWING THAT CONVERSATION, AND BASED ON THAT CONVERSATION, I CAN AGAIN FLATLY DENY ANY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE ON THE PART OF MR. DEAN REGARDING THE WATERGATE MATTER," ZIEGLER SAID.

"THE PRESIDENT HAS COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN MR. DEAN. HE WANTED ME TO EXPRESS HIS ABSOLUTE AND TOTAL CONFIDENCE IN MR. DEAN."

ZIEGLER SAID DEAN'S PRIVATE ATTORNEY CALLED NEWS ORGANIZATIONS TO WARN OF POSSIBLE LIBEL ACTIONS PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENT'S CONVERSATION WITH DEAN. BUT HE ADDED, "OF COURSE THAT'S MR. DEAN'S PEROGATIVE AS A LAWYER TO PROCEED AFTER HE HAS BEEN FALSELY MALIGNED."

ZIEGLER SAID THE PRESIDENT DID NOT SPEAK BY TELEPHONE WITH JEB MAGRUDER, NIXON'S FORMER ASSISTANT CAMPAIGN MANAGER, WHO WAS MENTIONED IN THE LOS ANGELES TIMES REPORT.

ZIEGLER SAID MAGRUDER HAS DENIED ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CASE. ZIEGLER ALSO CRITICIZED SAMUEL DASH, COUNSEL TO THE SPECIAL SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE, FOR CONDUCTING A "HASTILY CALLED SUNDAY MORNING PRESS CONFERENCE" TO REVEAL THAT HE HAD QUESTIONED ACCORD. "DASH DOES NOT SEEM TO ME TO BE AN ORDERLY AND JUDICIOUS MAN," ZIEGLER SAID.

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