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WHITE HOUSE DENIES RICHARDSON SMEAR

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21 (UPI) —A Presidential spokesman denied today that anyone at the White House was involved in spreading a report that former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson had a drinking problem.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy press secretary, also denied that President Nixon had accused Mr. Richardson of lying about his involvement in the dismissal of the special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox.

The Washington Post, in a front-page article Saturday, quoted Senators who met with Mr. Nixon and Alexander M. Haig the White House chief of staff, last week as saying that Mr. Haig made a reference to Mr. Richardson's drinking.

The Post said Mr. Haig

quoted Mr. Richardson as saying "I'd had a drink and I was tired." The Post said one Senator present took this to be an attempt to revive Mr. Richardson's conviction in 1939 on drunken driving charges and a 1951 driving accident.

Mr. Warren said that no one "in any position of authority" at the White House was involved in spreading that report. "We would certainly be interested in finding out who is doing this and we thoroughly disassociate ourselves from it," he said.

There also have been conflicting reports of Mr. Richardson's role when Mr. Cox was dismissed for not limiting his Watergate tapes investigation. Mr. Richardson has said that he opposed putting any limits on me, Cox, although Congressmen who met with Nixon last week said th President told them Richardson had no such objections.