

Previous Statements by President on Watergate

8/16/73

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15 (AP)—Following are previous statements by President Nixon on the Watergate case, excerpted from news conferences and statements issued by the White House

Aug. 29, 1972

Within our own staff, under my direction, counsel to the President, Mr. John W. Dean, has conducted a complete investigation of all leads which might involve any present members of the White House staff or anybody in the Government. I can say categorically that his investigation indicates that no one in the White House staff, no one in this Administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre affair.

Oct. 5, 1972

I agreed with the amount of effort that was put into it [the F.B.I. inquiry]. I wanted every lead carried out to the end because I wanted to be sure that no member of the White House staff and no man or woman in a position of major responsibility in the Committee for Re-Election had anything to do with this kind of reprehensible activity.

March 2, 1973

I will simply say with regard to the Watergate case what I have said previously, that the investigation conducted by Mr. Dean, the White House counsel, in which, incidentally, he had access to the F.B.I. records on this particular matter because I directed him to conduct this investigation, indicates that no one on the White House staff, at the time he conducted the investigation—that was last July and August—was involved or had knowledge of the Watergate matter.

And, as far as the balance of the case is concerned, it is now under investigation by a Congressional committee and that committee should go forward, conduct its investigation in an even-handed way, going into charges made against both candidates, both

political parties. . . Of course, no President could ever agree to allow the counsel to the President to go down and testify before a committee. . .

March 15, 1973

I have always insisted that we should cooperate with members of the Congress and with the committees of the Congress. And that is why we have furnished information. But, however, I am not going to have the counsel to the President of the United States testify in a formal session for the Congress. . . He will, however—the important thing is, he will—furnish all pertinent information. . . I have confidence in all of the White House people who have been named. I will express confidence again. But I am not going to comment on any individual matter that the committee may go into. . .

Members of the White House staff will not appear before a committee of Congress in any formal session. . . If the Senate feels at this time that this matter of separation of powers. . . if the Senate feels that they want a court test, we would welcome it. . .

April 17, 1973

All members of the White House staff will appear voluntarily when requested by the [Senate Watergate investigation] committee. . . I believe now an agreement has been reached which is satisfactory to both sides. The committee ground rules as adopted totally preserve the doctrine of separation of powers. They provide that the appearance by a witness may, in the first instance, be in executive session, if appropriate. Second, executive privilege is expressly reserved and may be asserted during the course of the questioning as to any questioning as to any questions. . .

On March 21, as a result of serious charges which came to my attention, some of which were publicly reported, I began intensive new inquiries into this whole matter. . . I can report today that there have been major developments in the case

concerning which it would be improper to be more specific now, except to say that real progress has been made in finding the truth. . . As I said before, as I have said throughout this entire matter, all Government employees and especially White House staff employees are expected fully to cooperate in this matter. I condemn any attempts to cover up this case, no matter who is involved.

April 30, 1973

Last June 17, while I was in Florida trying to get a few days rest after my visit to Moscow, I first learned from news reports of the Watergate break-in. I was appalled at this senseless, illegal action and I was shocked to learn that employees of the re-election committee were apparently among those guilty. . .

As the investigations went forward, I repeatedly asked those conducting the investigation whether there was any reason to believe that members of my Administration were in any way involved. I received repeated assurances that there were not. . . Because I believed the reports I was getting, because I had faith in the persons from whom I was getting them, I discounted the stories in the press.

Until March of this year I remained convinced that the denials were true. . . However, new information then came to me which persuaded me that there was a real possibility that some of these charges were true and suggesting further that there had been an effort to conceal the facts both from the public, from you, and from me. As a result, on March 21 I personally assumed the responsibility for coordinating intensive new inquiries into the matter, and I personally ordered those conducting the investigations to get all the facts and to report them directly to me, right here in this office. . .

Today, in one of the most difficult decisions of my Presidency, I accepted the resignations of two of my closest associates in the White

House—Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman—two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know. . . The counsel to the President, John Dean, has also resigned. . .

May 22, 1973

Already, on the basis of second and third-hand hearsay testimony by persons either convicted or themselves under investigation in the case, I have found myself accused of involvement in activities I never heard of until I read about them in News accounts. . .

I can and do state categorically:

1. I had no prior knowledge of the Watergate operation; 2. I took no part in, nor was I aware of, any subsequent efforts that may have been made to cover up Watergate; 3. A no time did I authorize any offer of executive clemency for the Watergate defendants, nor did I know of any such offer.

4. I did not know, until the time of my own investigation, of any effort to provide the Watergate defendants with funds; 5. At no time did I attempt, nor did I authorize others to attempt, to implicate the CIA in the Watergate matter.

6. It was not until the time of my own investigation that I learned of the break-in at the office of Mr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, and I specifically authorized the furnishing of this information to Judge W. Matt Byrne. 7. I neither authorized nor encouraged subordinates to engage in illegal or improper campaign tactics.

With hindsight, it is apparent that I should have given more heed to the warning signals I received along the way about a Watergate cover-up and less to the reassurances. . . as more information is developed, I have no doubt that more questions will be raised. To the extent that I am able, I shall also seek to set forth the facts as known to me with respect to those questions. . .