

Conflicts Seen In Statements By President

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President Nixon's new 4,000-word explanation of the Watergate affair has sown additional questions about whether some of his prior statements are now rendered inoperative.

When the President addressed the nation on television April 30, he indicated that none of his top investigators ever gave him any reason to believe that the bugging and espionage were linked to his administration.

"As the investigations went forward," Mr. Nixon said last month, "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."

Three weeks later, the President said in the Watergate statement released Tuesday that he did receive at least one warning to the contrary. It was from Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III last July 6, just a few weeks after the original break-in at Democratic National Headquarters.

Describing a phone conversation, Mr. Nixon related: "In the discussion, Mr. Gray suggested that the matter of Watergate might lead higher. I told him to press ahead with his investigation."

At a White House briefing, presidential counsel Leonard Garment said the new statement represents the President's best recollection of events after "extremely intensive study over the past weeks since the April 30 statement."

The new account of Watergate includes other points of direct or implied

conflict with earlier statements which the President made on Watergate.

On June 26 last year, eight days after police arrested the team of five men trying to plant telephone wiretaps at DNC headquarters, Mr. Nixon told a press conference:

"This kind of activity, as Mr. Ziegler has indicated, has no place whatever in our electoral process or in our government process. And, as Mr. Ziegler has stated, the White House has had no involvement whatever in this particular incident."

However, this week, the President acknowledged that a few days after the arrests he was aware that some of the culprits were the same men whom he had authorized to do the same sort of activity as employees of the White House in pursuit of national security leaks. Newspaper accounts identified E. Howard Hunt as a White House consultant on June 20, six days before Mr. Nixon's press conference disavowal of "this kind of activity" in politics or government.

Repeatedly over the past 11 months, Mr. Nixon has assured the public that he wanted both White House officials and other agencies of government to cooperate fully with the various investigations of the Watergate episode.

In his televised speech last month, he said "I was determined that we should get to the bottom of the matter and that the truth should be fully brought out

—no matter who was involved."

In an earlier statement issued April 17, he asserted: "As I have said before and 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 in this case, no matter who is involved."

Likewise, when he answered a press conference question last Aug. 29, Mr. Nixon promised "total cooperation" with the various investigations under way.

"What really hurts in matters of this sort," he said, "is not the fact that they occur, because overzealous people in campaigns do things that are wrong. What really hurts is if you try to cover it up."

This week, however, his statement revealed for the first time that the President did put restrictions on what White House aides and government investigators could disclose about the two Watergate burglars who had worked at the White House pursuing "national security" leaks.

"I instructed Mr. Halde- man and Mr. Ehrlichman, the President recalled, "to ensure that the investigation of the break-in not expose either an unrelated covert operation of the CIA or the activities of the White House investigations unit—and to see that this was personally coordinated between General (Vernon) Walters, the deputy director of the CIA, and Mr. Gray of the FBI."

By his own account, the President learned a few days afterward from the FBI director that there was no danger of exposing any unrelated CIA operations. The activities of the White House investigations unit have been become known only in recent weeks through independent disclosures.

"With hindsight," Mr. Nixon concluded, "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."