

Strong Retorts

GOP Denials of Demo Sabotage

Washington

The White House and the Nixon re-election committee yesterday denounced published reports that the Nixon campaign directed and financed sabotage of Democratic campaign efforts, but stopped short of denying the truth of specific allegations.

One of the specifics was a published report that Herbert W. Kalmbach, President Nixon's personal attorney, either authorized or paid for extensive political espionage and sabotage by Los Angeles attorney Donald H. Segretti.

"I will not dignify with comment stories based on hearsay, character assassination, innuendo, guilt by association," White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said.

ATTACK

Clark MacGregor, Mr. Nixon's campaign director, hastily convened a news conference to attack the Washington Post for publishing the reports, but refused to answer any questions on the allegations.

"The Post has maliciously sought to give the appearance of a direct connection between the White House and the Watergate (bugging case) — a charge which the Post knows — and half a dozen investigations have found — to be false," MacGregor said in a prepared statement he read before TV cameras.

In a parallel statement, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, Republican national chairman, said the GOP "has been the victim of a barrage of unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations by (Democratic presidential candidate) George McGovern and his partner-

in-mud-slinging, the Washington Post."

ALLEGATIONS

None of the GOP officials, however, dealt with specific allegations in reports by the Post and Time magazine, which the publications said were based on FBI and Justice Department files and sources in the Watergate investigation.

The specific charges were:

- That Kalmbach, who has handled such personal affairs for the President as the purchase of Mr. Nixon's San Clemente estate, authorized or paid Segretti more than \$35,000, mostly in cash, to organize systematic spying and sabotage against the Democrats.

- That presidential appointments secretary Dwight L. Chapin, a University of Southern California classmate of Segretti, hired the attorney in September, 1971, and served as his White House contact.

- That Gordon Strachan, an aide to H. R. Haldeman, White House chief of staff, also took part in hiring Segretti.

- That unnamed White House aides briefed Segretti in Miami during the GOP national convention on what he should tell a federal grand jury investigating the Watergate case in Washington. Questioning by a grand juror was said, however, to have disclosed Segretti's alleged relationship with Chapin.

Ziegler told reporters at his daily news briefing that Mr. Nixon has confidence in Chapin and later told the Los Angeles Times that the President has similar confidence in Kalmbach. Ziegler said he had nothing to add to Chapin's statement Sunday

that the Post charges were "based solely on hearsay . . . and fundamentally inaccurate."

DENIALS

Ziegler and MacGregor between them denied that Segretti had been employed by the White House, the Committee for the Re-election of the President or the campaign finance committee. But neither dealt with reports that Kalmbach authorized Segretti's alleged activities or actually paid him.

MacGregor's session with newsmen, which an aide opened by stating that no questions would be accepted, was tense.

Clark Mollenhoff, Washington correspondent for the Des Moines Register and Tribune and a former aide in the Nixon White House, challenged the campaign

director's credentials to speak on the investigation.

DEMAND

"What credibility do you have?" Mollenhoff demanded. "What documents have you seen? Because if you can't tell us, you have no right to stand there."

"That will be a matter you will have to determine in consultation with your editors," MacGregor replied.

At the end of his three-page statement, MacGregor said: "The unusual nature of the developments in this campaign in the last few days have convinced me that this appearance — and not answering your questions as is my wont — is justified."

He ignored a barrage of shouted questions as he strode from the crowded room.

L.A. Times Service



AP Wirephoto
CLARK MacGREGOR
He dodged questions

SFChronicle LETTER

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Editor — Right from the beginning it should have been evident American voters wouldn't buy the Watergate bugging/espionage case. Even a seventh-generation Democrat, steeped in the Lucky Dick legend, could scarcely imagine a man of Nixon's taut intelligence capability would tolerate such amateurish, bungling, inept Lourd and Hardy performance as that painted by O'Brien and the Washington Post. No, the affair is credible only when viewed as a badly botched plot by some mentally unsound, knee-jerk Nixon hater.

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