

DENIED BY EX-AIDE

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He Says the President Was Not Involved 'in Any Cover-Up'

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WASHINGTON, May 21—

H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff, reportedly told an official of the Central Intelligence Agency that "it is the President's wish" that the C.I.A. attempt to halt an investigation into one aspect of the Watergate case.

This was reported today by Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri, who said he was quoting from a document written nearly a year ago by Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the C.I.A.

Senator Symington said that Mr. Haldeman's statement regarding the President was contained in a "memorandum of conversations" that General Walters said he prepared after a White House meeting with Mr. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, another Presidential aide, last June, six days after the break-in of Democratic headquarters at the Watergate complex.

Testified Last Week

General Walters testified last week that he had been called to the White House and told he had been chosen to try to persuade L. Patrick Gray 3d, Federal Bureau of Investigation, to halt an inquiry into campaign funds "laundered" through a bank in Mexico City.

At that time, however, he made no mention that anyone had invoked the President's name in demanding his help.

The memorandum, according to Senator Symington, states that at one point during the meeting, Mr. Haldeman turned to General Walters and said: "It is the President's wish that you go to see Mr. Gray."

Mr. Haldeman denied later today that the President was in any way involved in the Watergate cover-up.

Statement by Haldeman

"I can flatly say that the President was not involved in any cover-up of anything at any time," Mr. Haldeman said.

Still another of General Walters's "memorandums of conversation" — written last year but disclosed today by another Congressional source— quotes Mr. Gray as saying that the President, during a telephone conversation, had inquired about "the case," an apparent reference to the Watergate inquiry.

This memorandum quotes

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Mr. Gray as telling the President that the Watergate case could not be covered up and that he thought that Mr. Nixon should get rid of those involved.

Meanwhile, there were the following other developments today in the Watergate affair:

Senator Symington disclosed that the Senate Armed Services Committee had acquired two sets of documents purporting to deal with Administration plans in the summer of 1970 to permit burglary and other violations of the law in the collection of intelligence information about United States citizens. He said the plans were never carried out.

Richard Helms, former director of the C.I.A., appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to defend that agency's role in granting White House requests for a personality profile on Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, later a defendant in the Pentagon papers case, and in furnishing materials to a White House aide involved in breaking into the office of Dr. Ellsberg's former psychiatrist.

Nixon's Name Not Used

Mr. Helms said he had presumed that White House aides were speaking for the President when they asked for C.I.A. assistance but he said he never heard the President's name used directly.

Asked why he had never informed the President of subsequent, and apparently unsuccessful, White House appeals for help in covering up the Watergate affair, Mr. Helms replied:

"My interest was to keep the C.I.A. out of this. Frankly, I wanted to stay as head of the agency and to keep it out of all this. I felt I'd be more successful than someone who might come afterward."

In effect, the C.I.A. aspects of the Watergate probe have opened up another complete Congressional investigation into potential White House involvement.

General Walters was questioned for nearly two and a half hours today at a closed hearing of the Intelligence Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee about points raised in the 11 memorandums of conversations he wrote last summer, shortly after the Watergate break-in.

'Heated' Questioning

Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, said that the general's responses to questions "were not totally satisfying" and that the questioning had become "heated at times."

Mr. Nedzi said that his subcommittee planned to question other witnesses, including Mr. Gray, Mr. Haldeman and three former White House aides— John D. Ehrlichman, John W. Dean 3d and David Young.

Neither Senator Symington nor Mr. Nedzi would release a copy of the Walter memorandum purporting to quote Mr. Gray as having told President Nixon that the Watergate case could not be covered up.

However, key excerpts from the memorandum were obtained from other Congressional sources.

The memorandum, prepared

by July 13, is said to be General Walter's recollection of a conversation held just a day earlier with Mr. Gray.

The document quotes Mr. Gray as saying that President Nixon had called him a week earlier to congratulate him on F.B.I. action frustrating an airplane hijacking in San Francisco.

Recommendation Sought

"Toward the end of the conversation," according to the Walters memorandum, "the President asked him [Gray] if he had talked to me [Walters] about the case. Gray replied that he had. The President then asked him what his recommendation was in this case."

The memorandum then continued:

"Gray had replied that the case could not be covered up and it would lead quite high and he felt that the President should get rid of the people that were involved. Any attempt to involve the F.B.I. or the C.I.A. in this case could only prove a mortal wound and would achieve nothing."

"The President then said, 'Then I should get rid of whoever is involved, no matter how high up?' Gray replied that was his recommendation.

"The President then asked what I thought and Gray said my views were the same as his. The President took it well and thanked him."

The memorandum further states that Mr. Gray told General Walters that he had subsequently telephoned Mr. Dean, then the President's White House counsel, to tell him of the conversation with Mr. Nixon and of his recommendation that all involved be discharged.

Dean's Response Given

General Walters said, according to the memorandum, that Mr. Dean's response to that was "okay."

Senator Symington's disclosure of the existence of documents dealing with intelligence gathering plans came at the end of two hours of questioning of Tom Charles Huston, a former White House aide, by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Senator Symington said that Mr. Huston had been called to verify the authenticity of documents "which bear his purported signature" and to testify about events described by the documents.

The Senator said both sets of documents "purportedly deal with certain studies, recommendations and decisions" in the White House in the summer and fall of 1970 concerning "intelligence collection and evaluation on both foreign and domestic subjects."

Senator Symington said the documents appeared to call for "violations of the law in the domestic collection of intelligence on United States citizens."

The Senator added: "There didn't seem to be any limitation on the amount of burglary involved."

Senator Symington quoted Mr. Huston as saying that copies of the suggested intelligence gathering plans were supposed to go to the President and to Mr. Haldeman but that all of his relations were with Mr. Haldeman.