

Ford gives congressional panel reasons for pardon

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Ford, in an unprecedented personal appearance before a congressional panel, said Thursday “there was no deal, period, under no circumstances,” in his pardon of former President Richard M. Nixon.

Ford said that he granted the pardon for the benefit of the nation, not Nixon, and he is convinced he did the right thing at the right time.

“I wanted to do all I could to shift our attentions from the pursuit of a fallen president to the pursuit of the urgent needs of a rising nation,” he said.

Ford said he hoped by coming before the House judiciary subcommittee and giving his account of the pardon personally he had “at least cleared the air” of the rumors and suspicions that have circulated about the pardon since he announced it Sept. 8.

But most subcommittee members said they still regarded many questions as unanswered, and Chairman William Hungate, D-Mo., said further hearings, with other witnesses, might be held after the November elections.

“I’m confident all the facts are not out,” said Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., author of one of the two resolutions of inquiry that led to Ford’s appearance.

Rep. Bella Abzug, D-N.Y., author of the other one, said more witnesses had to be called, particularly former White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig, before Congress and the nation could be certain there was no deal involved in the pardon.

“This is only the beginning,” she said.

Before submitting to brief questioning by the subcommittee members, Ford read for 45 minutes from a prepared statement in which he recounted to a nationwide radio-TV audience the steps leading up to the pardon.

He said a pardon was first mentioned to him by Haig at a meeting Aug. 1, a week before Nixon resigned, as one of six courses of action being considered in the White House. The meeting was prompted by the discovery that a tape Nixon had been withholding from the courts contained damaging evidence of his knowledge of the Watergate cover-

up, Ford said.

“The substance of his (Haig’s) conversation was that the new disclosure would be devastating, even catastrophic, insofar as President Nixon was concerned,” Ford said. The tape was made public Aug. 5, producing overwhelming sentiment in Congress for Nixon’s impeachment.