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# Ford, Rocky: No comment

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President Ford and Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, called upon to lead a nation after the Watergate scandal, said Wednesday they would not comment on the cover-up convictions of one-time top aides to former President Richard M. Nixon.

Ford and Rockefeller were among a number of top government officials, former officials, senators and representatives and those involved in the original Watergate burglary who were asked to comment on the convictions.

Two members of the Senate Watergate committee, Herman Talmadge, D-Ga., and Howard W. Baker, Jr., R-Tenn., both said the verdict was not unexpected.

"I feel real great sympathy and sadness for the families of the defendants in this tragedy," Baker said in Nashville, Tenn. "This moves us close to the final chapter of this unhappy episode in American history," he said of the trial's conclusion.

Ford, in Vail, Colo., for a holiday vacation, said through his Press Secretary Ron Nessen that he would have no comment on the cover-up convictions of former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell, former Nixon aides H.R. Haldeman and John N. Ehrlichman, and former Asst. Atty. Gen. Robert C. Mardian.

"He doesn't have anything to say about it," Nessen said. He said Ford heard of the verdict while watching a college football bowl game on television, and would not describe the President's reaction or his facial expressions at the time he learned of the outcome.

Nessen, asked whether any of the convicted had sought a presidential pardon, said: "No one has asked for a pardon."

Rockefeller was vacationing in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where his press secretary, Hugh Morrow, said the vice president would not comment.

Reaction from other quarters was varied, from no comments by former Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox and Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, to an expressed hope by another conspirator that the four will receive suspended sentences.

Bernard Barker, one of six convicted in the June 17, 1972, break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters that touched off the Watergate scandal, said in Miami that jail terms "are not the solution for the problems coming from Watergate ... They should have a suspended sentence."