

Nixon Pardon —Ford Holds To His Story

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Washington

President Ford stands by his public statements and testimony about the events leading up to the pardon of former President Nixon, a White House spokesman said yesterday.

Deputy press secretary William Greener said, "the President has dealt with candor and truthfulness at all times on this matter."

Greener denied a Washington Post story that President Ford assured former Nixon chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. on Aug. 28, 1974, that a pardon for Mr. Nixon would be forthcoming. This was ten days before President Ford announced the pardon.

It was learned from other White House sources, meanwhile, that President Ford failed to tell his own staff about his discussions with Haig regarding a pardon, and that — until questioned by reporters this week — Mr. Ford's top advisers were unaware that such conversations took place.

Had they known of the existence of such conversations, these sources said, they would have advised Mr. Ford to disclose them when he testified before a congressional subcommittee last year.

On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, Chairman Peter Rodino of the House Judiciary Committee directed a review of President Ford's testimony about the pardon, to determine if a subcommittee should reopen hearings into the matter.

According to Greener, President Ford and Haig did discuss the pardon question on Aug. 28, 1974, but only in the context of answers to questions about a possible pardon that Mr. Ford

Back Page Col. 5

From Page 1

gave at his press conference that day.

Three reliable sources have told the Post that the President and Haig had a substantive discussion that day about pardoning Mr. Nixon, and that Haig received assurances from Mr. Ford that a pardon would be granted.

In addition, both Haig and White House counsel Philip Buchen said earlier this week that Haig and the President had such a substantive discussion that day.

Haig has refused publicly to discuss what was said at his meeting with the President. Buchen has said that he doesn't know exactly what was discussed by the

two men.

The existence of the August 28 discussion appears to contradict Mr. Ford's testimony before a House judiciary subcommittee on Oct. 17, 1974, when he said:

"At no time after I became President on Aug. 9, 1974, was the subject of a pardon for Richard M. Nixon raised by the former President or by anyone representing him."

Greener denied that there was any contradiction. At a White House press briefing there seemed to be some question whether Haig, who was acting chief of staff for Mr. Ford at the time was technically "representing" former President Nixon.

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