

Chotiner Leaving White House to Aid Nixon's 1972 Race

JAN. 12 1971

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11 — Murray M. Chotiner, one of President Nixon's key political aides, will leave the White House Staff soon to begin organizing Mr. Nixon's campaign for re-election in 1972. Authoritative White House sources said today that Mr. Chotiner would remain in Washington as the director of a privately funded campaign organization. The sources said he would operate "under the tutelage" of Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who was Mr. Nixon's campaign manager in 1968.

Mr. Chotiner confirmed this afternoon that he was destined for a new assignment, but would not disclose its nature. "I know what my plans are, but I can't say yet," Mr. Chotiner said. "It's not time to announce them."

Neither Mr. Chotiner nor the sources would give a precise date for his departure from the White House. But it appeared likely to occur soon after the Republican National Committee holds its mid-winter meetings here this week.

As a private citizen, Mr.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1971

Chotiner to Begin Nixon '72 Campaign

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Chotiner would be free to begin working on the 1972 campaign effort, away from observers of the White House staff.

His private role would also bolster an apparent effort by Mr. Nixon to adopt a nonpartisan stance this year. The White House has been deliberately playing down politics in recent weeks.

"This is a noncampaign year," the President told television commentators during his "conversation" with them last week, "and now I'm going to wear my hat as President of the United States, and that's where I'll be on this program and on other programs for the balance of '71."

There had been speculation late last year that Mr. Chotiner would be reassigned to a staff post at the Republican National Committee after it had designated a new chairman.

But Mr. Chotiner said today that he would not work for the National Committee.

At first he did not answer the inquiry about a change in duties. Asked if he were going to leave the White House, Mr. Chotiner said, "I leave every day and I come back in the morning."

Then he confirmed that he was going to leave for a period longer than overnight, but declined to be more specific.

The White House sources said that they did not have any indication that the President intended to reassign his

two other staff political operatives, Harry M. Dent and Charles Colson.

Speculation that Attorney General Mitchell would resign sometime this year also arose following the Nov. 3 Congressional elections—and was denied by the Department of Justice.

By assigning Mr. Chotiner to a campaign role, with Mr. Mitchell as a part-time overseer, it would be possible for the Attorney General to remain in the Cabinet.

One source said that Mr. Chotiner would begin with "a small group that will keep expanding" as the 1972 campaign approaches in earnest. Mr. Mitchell could use it as the nucleus for an official campaign organization, should he decide late this year to manage another Presidential bid.

Mr. Chotiner's political assignment is the first solid indication of something few have doubted here, that the President intended to seek another four-year term.

The White House clearly has had the next Presidential election in mind, however, as Mr. Nixon's legislative plans for 1971 have taken shape. Their focus will be on domestic proposals, where the White House believes Mr. Nixon must establish in the coming months that the Administration is concerned about the well-being of the American citizen.

One source said today that Mr. Nixon would submit his legislative package in hopes

that Congress would go along with his major suggestions of Federal revenue-sharing and welfare reform, both of which are designed to rescue financially strapped cities and states.

At the same time, the source said, Mr. Nixon was prepared to take advantage of Congressional opposition if it should arise.

"The Democrats are going to have to hang together on this legislation," he said. "Either they all pass it—which removes a campaign issue—or they all reject it as bad legislation or insufficient. If they battle over it, they're going to be divided going into a national campaign."

Mr. Chotiner, who is 61, has been one of the President's closest political allies since 1946, when he handled publicity for Mr. Nixon's first campaign for the House of Representatives.

He helped again in a re-election contest in 1948 and, two years later, managed Mr. Nixon's successful campaign for the Senate from California.

Admirers have called Mr. Chotiner "the perfect political technician." Enemies have described him as "the complete political hatched man." Both sides have regarded him as a controversial figure in Republican politics.

He was rumored as a possible Republican National chairman when Mr. Nixon won the Presidential campaign in 1968, but opposition developed to Mr. Chotiner and he remained in the background.