

Bush Warns White House On Watergate Harm to GOP

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Republican National Chairman George Bush yesterday warned the White House that both he and the party organization are in danger of being compromised by the handling of the Watergate case.

The former Texas congressman and ambassador to the United Nations called a special meeting of all committee employees to say he was determined that "no one . . . connected with that whole mess" will work in future Republican campaigns.

Bush, picked for the chairmanship by President Nixon only four months ago, was variously described by committee associates as being angry, nervous, shaken and bitterly disappointed by two events this week:

- His discovery, on Mon-

day that, despite personal assurances to the contrary from H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and other White House officials, there was evidence linking Kenneth S. Rietz to political espionage activities. Rietz, the former head of the youth division of the Committee to Re-elect the President, resigned suddenly Tuesday from his month-old job as director of the "new majority campaign" at the Republican National Committee.

- The accidental revelation on Wednesday that Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of the Nixon campaign, who reportedly admitted to federal prosecutors on April 14 his involvement in the case, was still using a chauffeur-driven Mercury leased to the national committee. Magruder was employed by the Commerce Department until his

abrupt resignation yesterday.

Without mentioning either incident, Bush told the staff members, broken into two groups to fit into the committee's conference room, that no one "even remotely connected with that whole mess" will be allowed to have any role in future committee activities.

White House sources said the chairman had conveyed that same message to senior staff members there yesterday and had expressed his "dismay" at the handling of the Rietz and Magruder cases.

Bush was en route to a speaking engagement in Dallas last night and was not available for comment. Aides said he had no intention of resigning, but said that Bush was determined

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seven cars covered by a "master contract" with the national committee. Roussek said that five of the leased cars were used by the national committee and the other two by the re-election committee, which paid the bills for that pair.

The re-election committee, in turn, had given Magruder use of one of its cars without informing Bush or other national committee aides of the decision.

Magruder's attorney, James J. Bierbower, said last night that "if there is anything wrong with the arrangement, I don't know what it is."

He said that Magruder, who has been working in the Commerce Department since February, was given use of the car because his role in the Watergate investigation was considered a carryover of his duties at the re-election committee.

The Washington Post reported on April 19 that the previous Saturday Magruder, who had earlier denied any knowledge of the Watergate bugging, had told federal prosecutors that he had been present at meetings where former Attorney General John M. Mitchell and White House counsel John W. Dean III had approved the bugging plans. Mitchell later confirmed that he had heard them discussed, but said he had disapproved them.

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that there be no further incidents that could compromise his own position or cloud the national committee's claim of non-involvement in the Watergate case.

Federal prosecutors and Senate investigators have told The Washington Post they have no indication that the Republican National Committee had any knowledge of or involvement in the political espionage.

Those attending the staff conference quoted Bush as saying he has been spending most of his time trying to assure that "Watergate is not going to drag the GOP down."

The chairman said he understood why dedicated party workers in Washington and across the country would be dismayed by "the activities of a few people," but urged his listeners to have confidence in the President and the judicial system to expose those who were guilty.

He cautioned them against believing newspaper speculation or fueling rumors by their own remarks.

Privately, party officials and committee associates, with whom Bush has conferred in recent days, described the chairman as being very upset

by the Rietz incident.

The 31-year-old professional campaign consultant was recommended to Bush by Haldeman for a newly created job as head of a "new majority" division, which would recruit, select and groom candidates for 1974 Senate and House races. Much of the \$4.9 million in surplus funds of the Nixon re-election campaign was to be funneled to those candidates through Rietz.

Before appointing Rietz on Feb. 28, Bush reportedly sought and received assurances from Rietz, from Haldeman and from the White House personnel office that Rietz had no involvement in the political espionage charges.

Bush relied on those assurances in answering questions and criticisms from state party chairmen and others about the Rietz appointment.

On March 11, The Washington Post reported that George K. Gorton, Rietz' deputy at the re-election committee, had acknowledged hiring a George Washington University student to spy on peace demonstrators at the White House and passing on his reports to Rietz.

On Monday, National com-

mittee sources say Rietz told Bush he might be further implicated in the espionage investigation and had decided to resign.

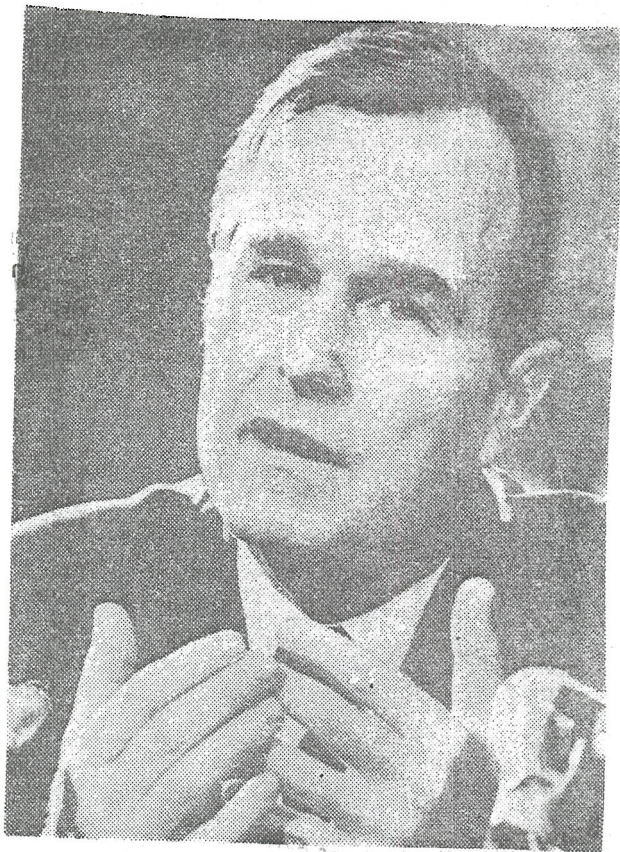
Senate investigators said Wednesday they had received testimony from the former scheduling director of the re-election committee, Herbert L. (Bart) Porter, that Rietz had also recruited a group of young people to infiltrate and spy on McGovern campaign headquarters.

Rietz told The Washington Post Wednesday that the George Washington student

was the only such employee, adding that "to say that I masterminded a spy ring of kids to spy on McGovern is ridiculous."

The matter of Magruder's car came to Bush's attention Wednesday when a traffic ticket arrived at the national committee for a car that committee staff members could not immediately identify.

Robert Roussek, the committee's communication director, said that inquiries to the Ford motor company determined that it was one of



By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post

George Bush: "Watergate is not going to drag GOP down."
