

Harder White House Line On Ervin Unit Testimony

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The White House has instructed presidential aides to claim executive privilege and refuse to answer certain questions in closed-door sessions of the Senate Watergate committee, according to reliable Government sources.

This appears to be a reversal of President Nixon's publicly stated position, last affirmed in a July 7 letter to the Senate committee, in which Mr. Nixon said he had "agreed to permit the unrestricted testimony of present and former White House staff members before your committee."

The restriction of testi-

mony is part of a "hard line" that is emerging as the President and his No. 1 aide, Alexander Haig, take more direct control in the response to Watergate, according to White House sources.

In the last week the following restrictions have been placed on testimony by White House personnel:

- Rosemary Woods, the President's personal secretary and executive assistant, was instructed not to appear for an interview after being requested to appear by the Senate committee.

- One present White House aide was instructed not to answer questions about comments the President

wrote in the margins of the daily news summary which Mr. Nixon receives.

- Secret Service agents were not only instructed not to answer questions about the tape recordings, secretly made of the President's conversations, but the agents have been told not to answer questions about any matters relating to protective services supplied to presidential candidates.

This effectively prevents the Senate committee from that Secret Service agents forwarded reports to the White House about the schedules and personal lives of at least one Democratic presidential contender.

A White House spokesman said last night:

"I flatly disagree with the view that there has been a watering down of the President's position and his willingness to cooperate with the Senate committee."

The official said that the few restrictions on testimony are consistent with the limitations of the Senate investigation.

On several occasions White House aides have been instructed by White House lawyers who sit in on the closed-door interviews at the Senate Committee not to answer questions relating to matters after April 30, which is the day that H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III left the White House staff.

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