

Government Looks Beyond Watergate

Haig: Optimism at White House

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon and the reorganized White House staff are recovering from the crisis of Watergate and are carrying out the responsibilities of government, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. said yesterday.

Speaking optimistically about future plans and programs, Haig nevertheless conceded that the hoped-for improvements in relations with the press and Congress are lagging because of Watergate.

But he said that when the President is able to make his Watergate defense—pre-

sumably in the near future—and to begin holding regular news conference again communication with both the public and Congress definitely will improve.

Haig spoke in an interview on the last day of his service in the Army. After his appointment as White House staff chief on May 4 he resigned as vice chief of staff and, yesterday his retirement from the Army after 26 years of service took effect.

Haig vigorously denied

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Richardson: New Rule at Justice

By Sanford J. Ungar
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Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson yesterday said he plans to issue a comprehensive set of guidelines next week that will require the keeping of an "appropriate internal record" of all third-party contacts with the Justice Department—including those from the White House and Capitol Hill—on all pending cases.

The guidelines are intended "to deal with the problem of enhancement or restoration of confidence" in the Justice Department, Richardson said yesterday

in an interview with The Washington Post.

They will be unveiled and explained during the Attorney General's speech to the annual American Bar Association convention here next week. The speech is expected to focus on the need, arising out of the Watergate affair, to reassure the public about the Justice Department's "integrity," he said.

Richardson said during the interview that the Watergate scandal and last year's furor over an anti-trust settlement with the In-

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published reports that there is a hard-line group in the White House planning counterattacks against critics in Congress.

Characterizing the reports as "nonsense," Haig said such action would be contrary to the President's determination to try to build bipartisan support in both foreign and domestic policy.

Haig's upbeat report on White House activity is similar to other official comments in recent days. Speaking to 55 agricultural attaches from U.S. embassies abroad, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew said yesterday that the government is being carried forward despite Watergate.

"Government is proceeding here in Washington and new initiatives for peace are going forward," Agnew said.

The staff reorganization has been largely completed, Haig said. "The directions have been set and are accepted and understood by all, but there are many things that are going to take time to mature and blossom."

The President has been under restraint not to speak out on Watergate because of the investigations, but he will do so at the earliest opportunity after the first phase of the Senate hearings are completed, Haig indicated.

It originally was believed that the President would issue his statement as early as next week, but that was when the committee was expected to take a month's recess beginning this Friday.

With the committee planning to continue its hearings into next week and perhaps longer, the President may delay his report. But he still plans to make it public before going to California later this month, Haig said.

The decision to speak out on Watergate and then to hold regular news conferences has been made, Haig said. But the timing and forum for the statement have not been determined, he said.

In looking back over his nearly three months as

White House staff chief, Haig said new directions have been set, there has been a greater decentralization of power, a lowering of the profile of the White House staff, increased cooperation and communication with the Cabinet and agency chiefs, and planning for greater cooperation with Congress.

The appointments of Melvin R. Laird and Bryce N. Harlow as counsellors to the President with broad mandates in domestic affairs have strengthened the President's hand and will be a "great asset" to him in improving relations with Congress, Haig said.

"We have an awful lot of work to do to get legislation moving the way it should," he said. But he said the decision to try to work on a bipartisan basis has been made and that the legislative office under William E. Timmons has been enlarged and strengthened.

"I am optimistic that we can establish a relatively dramatic difference from the last few months," he emphasized.

The President has told the staff to be expeditors and facilitators of policy rather than directors, Haig said. That was a reference to the change decided upon after the departure of H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, both charged with keeping agency heads at arm's length, and dealing with them in an arbitrary manner.

Despite Watergate and despite the President's recent illness and his week-long meeting with Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev, the President has kept an extremely busy schedule, Haig said.

By the end of this week, Mr. Nixon will have met with 10 heads of government since early May, Haig said. In addition, he has held eight Cabinet meetings, met 27 times with Cabinet officers, met with 14 major congressional groups and 35 smaller groups, held five meetings with the Quadriad or Troika on economic matters and held many meetings with economic advisers, Haig said.

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International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. are examples of the problem he hopes to solve with the guidelines.

If the proposed guidelines had already been in effect, department officials presumably would have been required to keep a list of every phone call or other communication seeking to influence the outcome of the Watergate and ITT cases.

Under current practice, which requires no such records, efforts to influence the Justice Department have generally remained secret and have been revealed only through court proceedings, other investigations and leaks to the press.

The ITT controversy was substantially fueled, for example, when it was revealed that a director of the company had met privately several times in 1971 with then-Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

On July 18, the Senate unanimously passed a bill, co-sponsored by John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) and Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.), requiring a "public impact statement" and a listing of all "lobbying contacts" in antitrust cases. The bill is now pending in the House.

But Richardson's proposed guidelines would go further, extending the concept to all areas of Justice Department operations.

The records of contacts would apparently be kept confidential under normal circumstances.

However, if the result were challenged in any case handled by the Justice Department, the Attorney General said, the lists could be used to demonstrate that it was "arrived at on proper grounds and not influenced by any improper consideration."

Acknowledging that the Watergate scandal has had a serious impact on morale within the Justice Department, Richardson said that people who "work conscientiously to do things right" have found themselves "affected by a miasmic cloud of suspicion and criticism."

He stressed that there is nothing inherently improper about "comments" on a case from governmental or private sources, but said he wants to "assure that all communications are a matter of record."

The Attorney General said he had consulted neither the White House nor Capitol Hill on the subject and has no plans to do so, because "I would expect

that they would consider it an appropriate matter for departmental administration."

Richardson had these comments on other subjects during the interview:

• He said he has no second thoughts about the wisdom of appointing a special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, to handle all Watergate investigations and prosecutions.

Such an appointment became "mandatory," Richardson said, once he, as a person with close ties to the Nixon administration, had been named to succeed Kleindienst as Attorney General.

Asked whether Cox would get help from Solicitor General Robert H. Bork during appeals in the battle over access to tape recordings of President Nixon's conversations, he said, "the answer is probably no"—because "the concept of (Cox) independence" requires that he follow through with the cases himself.

• He said he is not aware of any evidence that the White House Plumbers, whose activities led to dismissal of charges against Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon Papers case, had played a role in the Gainesville, Fla., case against seven members of and one sympathizer with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

But Richardson added that he "certainly can't guarantee" that the problem will not arise, although "we have taken all the steps we know how to take to satisfy ourselves on the point."

• He said that during the course of a general review of all Justice Department activities, he has particularly asked for "further information" on the "intelligence functions" of the Internal Security Section of Justice's Criminal Division.

While insisting that he has no "preconceptions" on the matter, Richardson said he wants to know "what we are given information about, how we are getting it and what value does it have?"

• He stressed "the need for a comprehensive approach to planning for the criminal justice responsibilities of the federal government."

Complaining that only the Justice Department's Antitrust Division and a few regional U.S. attorneys had been concerned about this need in the past, Richardson said he "would like to see the department adopting a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach to the allocation of resources."