

Nixon's Firing Of Archibald Cox



— Jack Anderson —

THE REAL REASON President Nixon fired the special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, was to prevent the investigation from getting any closer to the Oval Office.

Sources who have heard the President express his misgivings say he became convinced Cox was out to get him. He believed the "Kennedy crowd" had taken over the special prosecutor's office and was embarked upon a "political witch hunt."

This idea was fostered by former presidential aides who, themselves, expected to be prosecuted by Cox. Such Watergate figures as H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and Charles Colson spread the word around the White House that Cox was really aiming at the President.

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EMBATTLED and suspicious, Mr. Nixon was easy to persuade and he began to feel Cox's hot breath on his neck. Two recent developments finally convinced him that he would have to fire Cox.

First, the President heard that the special prosecutors had badgered his former campaign manager, Clark MacGregor, for refusing to corroborate incriminating testimony from ex-FBI chief L. Patrick Gray.

In telling about a telephone warning to the President that his top aides might be implicated in the Watergate crimes, Gray swore he had discussed this with MacGregor. When MacGregor failed to support Gray's story, the prosecutors allegedly

gave him a rough going-over.

Second, the President learned that Cox's bloodhounds were trying to link a \$100,000 contribution from billionaire Howard Hughes to the purchase of the Nixon estates at Key Biscayne, Fla., and San Clemente, Calif. The money was delivered in \$100 bills to the President's friend, Bebe Rebozo, who claimed he returned the full amount after keeping it in a safety deposit box for three years.

The special prosecutors questioned the President's personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, about the transaction a few days ago. He supported the White House claim that no money from Rebozo had gone into the San Clemente purchase. But Kalmbach raised doubts about another White House statement that the President had no knowledge of the \$100,000 payment until it came under investigation.

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AT A WHITE HOUSE press briefing, a reporter noted that the President "has spent a great deal of time with Mr. Rebozo. Does the President and do you really expect the American people to believe that in all those years of the most frequent and intimate contact that Mr. Rebozo never told the President he had this money in his box?"

"Yes," insisted spokesman Gerald Warren, "because it happens to be true."

But Kalmbach tended to dispute this when he was interrogated behind closed doors by both the special prosecutors and Senate investigators.