

# Haig Refuses to Answer Senators

Washington <sup>W.X.P.</sup> MEYER

President Nixon ordered White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. not to answer questions before the Senate Select Watergate Committee yesterday, despite Mr. Nixon's promise of a year ago not to invoke executive privilege in the Watergate investigation.

Haig, appearing under subpoena at a closed meeting of the Senate committee, presented a letter from Mr. Nixon instructing him not to answer any questions. Then, on the spoken advice of Mr. Nixon's special Watergate lawyer, James D. St. Clair, Haig refused during a half hour of interrogation to answer a series of questions about a \$100,000 payment made by billionaire Howard Hughes.

It was the first formal invocation of executive privilege by a senior White House official since Mr. Nixon promised on May 22, 1973, that "executive privilege will not be invoked as to any testimony concerning possible criminal conduct

or discussions of possible criminal conduct, in the matters presently under investigation, including the Watergate affair and the alleged coverup."

Haig's refusal to testify was consistent however, with the new hard-line position that the White House has apparently chosen to take following the release Tuesday of edited transcripts of President Nixon's White House conversations with aides concerning the Watergate affair.

Haig was called before the Senate committee to answer questions concerning the payment of \$100,000 by Hughes to President Nixon's friend, Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, according to informed sources. The committee has been investigating the \$100,000 transaction for several months, trying to determine, among other things, what the purpose of

the payment was and whether the money was used or kept untouched in a safe deposit box as Rebozo and Mr. Nixon have asserted.

Informed sources say that President Nixon's former attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach, has testified under

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oath before the committee that Rebozo either loaned or gave portions of the \$100,000 to Mr. Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods, and to his brother, F. Donald Nixon.

During his appearance yesterday, Haig had discussed criminal actions with any other individuals, whether he had called then attorney General Elliot L. Richardson on Oct. 18, 1973 about the \$100,000, and whether Haig had discussed the \$100,000 with any of several persons, including Miss Woods, Kalmbach, Donald and Edward Nixon, Rebozo, former White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and former top presidential Domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman.

Chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. of the Senate Watergate committee said he did not think executive privilege "has any application whatever to any matter in connection with the Watergate affair." He said the committee did not want to question Haig about any transactions with Mr. Nixon but only about "transactions" he had with other people and especially political transactions.

Ervin said executive privilege exists under "very restricted circumstance and covers confidential communications that are held for the purpose of advising the President and that claims of executive privilege in the Haig case are totally unsupported."