

Santarelli's Resignation Is Accepted

By William Claiborne
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President Nixon yesterday accepted the resignation of Donald E. Santarelli as head of the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Santarelli said he was quitting because of "misleading" reports that he wanted the President to resign.

He said publication of the reports "May harmfully affect my ability to continue to serve your administration."

Santarelli complained that a quotation attributed to him to the effect that Mr. Nixon should resign because of the Watergate scandals "is one of those infamous journalistic contextual contortions that give words wholly different meaning than was intended."

He added, "I do not even suggest that you should resign."

Santarelli had criticized Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate affair in recent interviews with the Associated Press and the Philadelphia Inquirer.

In each case, Santarelli said after the interviews were published that he had misunderstood the ground rules of the interviews, and had not meant his remarks to be published. He said the remarks were "misinterpreted" and taken out of context, although he did not challenge their accuracy.

In his letter, Santarelli pledged his "continued public and personal support" to Mr. Nixon, adding, "I most sincerely regret that any remarks of mine could be interpreted as suggesting a lack of support for you on my part."

An aide said that until a successor is chosen Santarelli will remain as head of LEAA, which administers about \$900 million in grants to state and local law enforcement agencies.

Santarelli refused to talk with reporters yesterday, but Justice Department sources said Mr. Nixon was not bothered by the published remarks and had not requested the resignation.

The sources said, however, that Attorney General William B. Saxbe had become disturbed over the second published interview, and had urged the White House to accept Santarelli's resignation.

In a written reply to Santarelli, the President made no mention of the interviews. He praised Santarelli for "working tirelessly toward reform of our system of criminal justice."