

White House Staff Seeks to Carry On During Crisis

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MIAMI, May 28—Over the last few days, the White House has been announcing appointments—management positions in the Department of Defense, assistant secretaries in the departments and others—just as if the Government were functioning under normal conditions.

The reason is that Roy L. Ash, the controversial director of the Office of Management and Budget, has been moved in to fill one vacuum left by the resignations on April 30 of H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the two top Presidential aides forced out of office by the Watergate disclosures.

Final approval of appointments to scores of vacant posts in the Government had piled up unattended for weeks as Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, who had authority for final clearance, were preoccupied with Watergate problems.

Mr. Ash said more appointments would continue over the next few weeks.

This is one of the changes that has taken place in the White House Hierarchy since the Haldeman-Ehrlichman regime crumbled. Over all, however, the staff has not undergone the drastic shake-up some observers had expected. Many Haldeman - Ehrlichman innovations are still in place.

Present Operations

Although there is still little public access to many functions of the Presidency, following is a rough outline of how the White House is functioning during the Watergate crisis, as obtained from interviews with some participants and statements from the press office:

Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., the new chief of staff on an interim basis, is running the staff with military assistants. He has yet to make major changes in the channels of authority reaching down from the President. He is in daily contact with Mr. Nixon almost as much as was Mr. Haldeman.

Although part of the super-Cabinet has been disbanded, with three Secretaries losing their additional titles as Presidential Counselors, there has not been much actual change in the line of authority. Henry A. Kissinger in foreign affairs, Secretary of the Treasury and Presidential Counselor George P. Shultz on economic affairs and Mr. Ash in management and budget still operate as a super-Cabinet.

¶The Office of Management and Budget, which has long had broad authority in the policies and operations of the executive branch has assumed even more importance in the Watergate crisis, as every department and agency has undergone shock and uncertainty. A reorganization of office planned late last year, aimed at coordinating management and policy throughout the executive branch, was put into effect more than one month ago and is functioning, Mr. Ash said, pretty much as planned.

¶The shift to a more open White House operation that some on the staff predicted after the resignations of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman has not come about. For example, the White House has never disclosed what help and advice the President is receiving from John B. Connally, who was appointed as an unpaid, part-time Presidential adviser and has an office in the Executive Office Building. *ip any m*

Some small steps have been taken to disperse the power that had been concentrated in the office of the President when Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman were in control. Some management functions that had been performed by the office of Management and Budget were recently delegated to the General Services Administration, a step, one official said, to dispense of duties "not Presidential in scope." The budget office however, retains the more important functions in policy and planning.

There seems to be some change in the caliber of advice the President is receiving.

President Nixon has been in Key Biscayne and the Bahamas since Friday. The group of aides he brought with him to help plan policy in a number of areas over the next few days rarely had access to him before the Watergate disclosures. They included, in addition to General Haig, two long-time associates who had been given little authority in the first Nixon term — Leonard Garment, his new White House counsel, and Patrick J. Buchanan, a special consultant.

In the last week or so, the

President has sought to broaden his consultations with members of Congress. For example, for a meeting on foreign policy in Washington tomorrow Mr. Nixon invited, in addition to the bipartisan Congressional leadership — the democratic and Republican leaders of six committees — the Foreign Relations and Armed Services panels of both houses as well as the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

Few New Initiatives

Over all, however, the executive branch seemed to be functioning under the old forms on a day-to-day basis and in such a state of uncertainty that few new initiatives were being made.

The President's bold move in January to institute a broad program of special revenue sharing with the states and localities in place of the specific aid programs enacted by the Democrats appeared in jeopardy. There has been little drive by the shaken Administration to push them in Congress.

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