

HALDEMAN DENIES A KEY ROLE IN '70

Pictures Himself as Conduit in Revoked Spying Plan

8/73
By MARJORI HUNTER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 7—H. R. Haldeman told a House subcommittee today that he was merely the conduit between President Nixon and drafters of 1970 plans for expanded domestic intelligence gathering.

The former White House chief of staff was quoted as saying that he was not "directly involved in preparation of those plans, nor in recommending their approval by the President."

Mr. Haldeman was smiling broadly as he emerged from three hours of questioning by a House Armed Services subcommittee investigating apparent White House efforts to involve the Central Intelligence Agency in covering up the Watergate affair.

He made a brief statement, saying that he had fully cooperated with the committee, but firmly declined to comment on his testimony.

Discussed by Nedzi

Later, however, Representative Lucien N. Nedzi of Michigan, the Democratic chairman of the subcommittee, discussed portions of the Haldeman testimony in response to questions.

Mr. Nedzi quoted Mr. Haldeman as saying that he had not participated in drafting, approving or later rescinding the 1970 intelligence-gathering plan.

White House documents obtained by The New York Times and published yesterday indicated that President Nixon had approved the plans in July, 1970, after being cautioned that parts were "clearly illegal" and involved "serious risks" to his Administration if the operations were ever discovered.

Mr. Nixon disclosed on May 22 of this year that he had approved an intelligence plan in 1970 but had rescinded his approval five days later because of the opposition of J. Edgar Hoover, at that time Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In recommending in 1970 that

restrictions be lifted on breaking and entry by intelligence agencies, the Interagency Committee on Intelligence warned that "use of this technique is clearly illegal."

Despite this, the plan was approved by the President through Mr. Haldeman after Tom Charles Huston, a staff assistant to Mr. Nixon, told Mr. Haldeman: "We don't want the President linked to this thing with his signature on paper (because) all hell would break loose if this thing leaks out."

In his May 22 statement, Mr. Nixon noted that a copy of the intelligence plan and "related documents" were taken from the White House by John W. Dean 3d, shortly before he was dismissed on April 30 as chief White House counsel.

On May 4, Mr. Dean put a copy of the plan and other documents — believed to be memorandums from Mr. Huston to Mr. Haldeman about the affair — in a safe deposit box. Later, Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the Federal District Court here turned copies of the papers over to the Justice Department and the Senate's Watergate investigating committee.

Deplored by Warren

A White House spokesman said today that publication of portions of the so-called "Dean papers" by The New York Times "illustrates the seeming impossibility of maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive Government documents."

Gerald R. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, deplored what he termed "this climate which encourages leaks of classified materials." The climate, he added, "seems to encourage people to gain possession of these documents by whatever means they do it and make them available for publication."

Asked if the White House intended to bring a case against Mr. Dean, as it did against Dr. Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon papers case, Mr. Warren replied: "I am not going to from here discuss what may happen in this matter."

Mr. Warren also refused to discuss whether the White House would seek an injunction against further publication of the Dean papers.

Meanwhile, top-ranking members of the special Senate Watergate investigating committee and of the Senate Armed Services Committee said today

that the Dean documents had not been leaked by those committees.

After gaveling the Watergate Committee into session this morning, Senator Sam J. Ervin, Democrat of North Carolina, announced that he was "happy to report" that it was not his committee that had made the Dean papers available to newspapers.

'Wisdom of the Ages'

"I have a very wise man for a vice chairman of this committee," the Senator said, referring to Senator Howard Baker, Republican of Tennessee.

"In spite of his youthful appearance, he has the wisdom of the ages," Senator Ervin continued, "and he suggested to me when the papers were received that we deposit them in a secure place under the most watchful security officer."

Senator Ervin said that an

investigation this morning showed that the papers had not been distributed.

Senator Baker, discussing security measures taken for the Dean papers, said the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, which has high security facilities, permitted the Watergate Committee to store the papers in a separate safe in an area protected 24 hours a day by guards and automatic detection systems.

Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, acting chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, also said today that the Dean papers were not leaked from that committee.

"Some of these documents are more a problem of national embarrassment than one of national security," he said. "We hope as much of this information as possible is released to the public as soon as possible, but none at the expense of national security."