

RELEASE OF TAPES OPPOSED BY HAIG

President's Chief of Staff
Fears Precedent Would
Mean Further Demands

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Alexander M. Haig Jr. says that he opposes selective release of the secret tapes of President Nixon's conversations with his assistants, because Watergate defendants accused of perjury would then insist on complete disclosure in an effort to exonerate themselves.

The White House chief of staff also contends that release of any tapes to the Watergate committee would give Congressional committees investigating the secret bombing of Cambodia and the Soviet wheat deal an "equal right to insist on the tapes that covered their particular question under review."

Mr. Haig made his remarks in an interview with Mike Wallace, a newsman for the Columbia Broadcasting System. The interview was broadcast last night on the C.B.S. program, "60 Minutes."

Mr. Haig said he had favored full disclosure of the tapes until he had discussed the "legal and political" implications and the "constitutional issues involved" with the President's senior advisers. He then decided that the tapes "would not be a major factor" in arriving at the truth.

'Calculated Defense'

The former Army vice chief of staff, who assumed his present post May 4 but officially retired from the Army this week, said that the White House had been in a "period of calculated defense" because the President had been "the victim of a number of charges and innuendo that have been carried very extensively in the American press."

Mr. Haig said another reason for not releasing the tapes was the fact that the "President may have said things, which if brought to public consciousness," could do "severe damage, not only to the individual, but even more importantly, to the institution of the Presidency itself."

Asked if he thought the President had a legal right to order burglary in national security cases, as former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman asserted in his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, Mr. Haig said that such acts had been "authorized historically in our country by Presidents," and added that breaking and entering had been authorized under recent, previous administrations.

Mr. Haig said that in "the context of the business of this Government, its role internationally and its mission for the American people, Watergate has been blown out of context." But he declined to criticize members of the Senate committee—"I couldn't hold them in higher respect"—or the press, which he said is "doing what it should do."