

Haldeman denies misuse of CIA

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WASHINGTON (AP) — H. R. Haldeman denied under bitter cross-examination Tuesday that he ever intended to misuse the Central Intelligence Agency to cut short the initial FBI investigation into Watergate.

Spending his third day on the witness stand at the Watergate cover-up trial, Haldeman said he had no memory of any plan to prevent the FBI from uncovering links from the White House and the 1972 Nixon reelection committee to the original Watergate break-in.

Before Haldeman resumed the stand, U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica disclosed he is considering taking the testimony of Richard M. Nixon by submitting written questions to the former president.

The judge asked three courtappointed doctors who have examined Nixon to recommend whether he is healthy enough to provide written answers to questions submitted by both prosecution and defense lawyers.

John D. Ehrlichman's lawyer has asked Sirica to delay the trial so that Nixon might testify under oath in California beginning Jan. 6, the earliest date the doctors said the former president might be healthy enough to testify.

Haldeman's lawyer, John J. Wilson, said Tuesday he will join in the request to Sirica that Nixon's testimony be taken by deposition after the first of the year.

Among a series of contentious exchanges between Haldeman and assistant special prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste, the prosecutor asked:

"Isn't it a fact that you called in America's foremost and highest level man responsible for the intelligence-gathering function for the national security of the United States and ... your instructions were to have the FBI curtailed on the ground that it was politically embarrassing for the investigation to be continued?"

Haldeman replied, "That was my understanding ..."

Referring to a June 23, 1972, meeting

with two top CIA officials Ben-Veniste asked, "Isn't it a fact, Mr. Haldeman, that you did something you had no right under the law to do and that is to misuse your position in the government ... in a way to defraud the CIA and the FBI, to defraud the government of the United States for reasons which you knew were not to be in the national interest?"

The former White House chief of staff answered loudly and with no hesitation, "I had no intention of exceeding the responsibilities of my job. I had no intention of defrauding and misusing the CIA or the FBI.

"I had no intention of obstructing the investigation ... no intention to do anything improper."