

Turmoil in the Pentagon

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

WASHINGTON—Two backstage tipoffs this week by Elliott Richardson, which threw the defense community into a frenzy, revealed his intent to be Secretary of Defense in fact as well as name — independent of high White House aides and powerful Capitol Hill hawks.

Tipoff No. 1: Richardson let it be known at the Pentagon that he not only intends bringing key aide Jonathan Moore from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) to Defense but is seriously considering him for the sensitive post of Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs (ISA), now held by superhawkish Warren Nutter. Moore, a former foreign service officer, is a well-known liberal Republican with markedly dovish views on Vietnam and defense policy.

Tipoff No. 2: In a meeting at the White House, Richardson suggested William G. Miller, aide to retiring liberal Republican Sen. John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, as a Pentagon staffer. Another ex-foreign service officer, Miller has been the mastermind behind Cooper's Senate activities against President Nixon's global policies.

Richardson was thereby casting out a double gauntlet. By hinting his intention to name his own assistant secretary, he challenges the White House quest for iron control over government departments. By identifying two committed doves as advisers, he challenges congressional hard-liners who resist a softer defense policy.

Thus, there looms a classical Washington power struggle but with much more than personal authority at stake. To strong proponents of national security worried about what direction defense policy might take

with Richardson at the Pentagon, nothing less than the nation's survival is at stake.

The hard-liners had just such concerns when Richardson's appointment was announced Nov. 28. But, as we forecast, they were mollified by the appointment of conservative Texas oil executive William Clements as deputy secretary, an appointment made by President Nixon without consulting Richardson. Not only was Mr. Nixon following plans to totally control the government by naming his own men to the subcabinet, he was also declaring against major deviations from outgoing secretary Melvin R. Laird's strong defense line.

Once Clements was officially announced, worried hard-liners were given this reassurance: While Richardson presented a more liberal facade, Clements would be making policy.

Strong defense advocates breathed easier — but not for long. They were disturbed this week to find Moore at a Pentagon desk as Richardson's transition representative.

THE WORST was yet to come. If Capitol Hill hawks distrust Moore from afar, they detest Miller at close distance. Having battled Miller in behalf of Nixon's national security programs since 1969, horrified Senate Republicans believe his possible appointment confirms their worst suspicions about Richardson.

Complicating this ideological struggle is the determination by White House major domo H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and his bloodlessly efficient personnel chief, Frederick Malek, to run cabinet-level departments from the President's Oval Office.