

Laird Is Named Top Nixon Aide

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Washington

President Nixon brought former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird back into his Watergate-shaken administration yesterday as chief domestic adviser and named General Alexander Haig to head the White House staff.

Laird promptly indicated that the appointments were

part of a concerted administration effort to restore confidence in the government both at home and abroad.

"It's absolutely essential that we get on with the business of government," Laird told a White House news conference. "Government in some quarters is at a standstill and this cannot be allowed to be continued."

As part of the administration reshuffle, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler was given the title of assistant to the President while retaining his press secretary's duties.

Since the President first acknowledged a Watergate coverup by White House staff members on March 21, Ziegler has played an increasingly important policy role in the administration and turned over many of the daily briefing chores to his deputy, Gerald L. Warren.

The 50-year-old Laird, a longtime personal friend of Mr. Nixon, was given the title of Counselor to the President for Domestic Affairs and inherits many of the responsibilities held by John Ehrlichman, one of the lead-

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ing Watergate scandal casualties of the Nixon second term.

But there were hints that Laird, who came out of semi-retirement and gave up his congressional pension pay to take the job, may be even more influential than was Ehrlichman.

"The man makes the job

and particularly in the case of Mr. Laird," said Warren in announcing the appointment.

Laird said he had been personally assured by Mr. Nixon, he was not involved in the Watergate case or the subsequent coverup.

A few weeks ago Laird told reporters that he would not want to know if Mr. Nixon were involved but he said yesterday that he was speaking as a private citizen then and did not hold that view as a government official.

DOLLAR

One of Laird's top priorities, he told reporters, will be restoring faith in the confidence of the dollar abroad.

Laird spent 16 years in the House, 14 of them on the Appropriations Committee, as a congressman from Wisconsin. He was named defense secretary by Mr. Nixon in 1969 after Senator Henry Jackson (Dem-Wash.)

rejected an offer of appointment. Laird held the post throughout the first term and turned down offers to remain in the administration during the second term.

Haig, 48, rose from colonel to four-star general after he was assigned to the White House in 1969, first as military adviser and then as assistant to Henry Kissinger. The President named Haig interim chief of staff in May following the resignation of H. R. Haldeman.

Since that time, Haig has been subject to some criticism for serving as the top White House administrative officer, normally a civilian job, while retaining his post as Army chief of staff.

It was announced yesterday, however, that Haig will retire from active military duty on August 1 when he formally becomes an assistant to the President and takes over Haldeman's former duties on a permanent basis.

Neither Haig nor Laird will use the title "chief of staff" or similar military-sounding phrases, Laird said yesterday.

POLICY

He promised a policy of openness with the press, noting that he had conducted 195 press conferences during his tenure as defense secretary. And Laird indicated he would move to repair rela-

tionships with the Democratic-controlled Congress by maintaining the "broadest, most open lines of communication" with members of the House and Senate.

"My closest friends" in Washington are the Democratic and Republican members of both the House and Senate," Laird said. "I love the Senate."

Long before the Watergate scandal was acknowledged by the administration, the White House staff was frequently accused of high-handedness and secrecy in dealing with Congressmen, the press and the public.

In back-to-back briefings Laird and Warren demonstrated that the administration is now trying to erase the impression of a closed-door administration and improve access for everyone.

"You've already seen signs of more leadership, more cabinet meetings," Warren said. "... He (Mr. Nixon) wants to create more access to the President and to the upper levels of the White House."

However, the President subsequently canceled a reception for House Republican members yesterday afternoon and a bipartisan leadership meeting scheduled for this morning. He will hold a cabinet meeting today.



President Nixon strolled in the White House Rose Garden with Melvin Laird (left) and General Alexander M. Haig.

Fuller WXPost story is filed Watergate, attached to back of story by Lawrence Meyer and Peter Osnos, "Sloan Says Officials Asked for Perjury." Last paragraph: "In another announcement yesterday Warren said that Charles Allen Wright, whom he described as a "constitutinal specialist," had been employed as a \$150-a-day consultant to assist White House Counsel Leonard Garment on Watergate-related issues."