

Nixon Names Laird Domestic Adviser

Haig to Direct Staff, Retire From Army

Ziegler Gets Larger Role

By Lou Cannon

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President Nixon brought former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird back into his Watergate-shaken administration yesterday as chief domestic adviser and named Gen. 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 U.S. 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 continue."

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 cover-up 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 leading Watergate 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 the President that Mr. Nixon was not involved in the Watergate case or the subsequent cover-up. On May 1 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.

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

"Those people who are speculating against the dollar are making a very grave error," Laird said in reference to European money dealers.

Laird said he will make new recommendations to the President for action to curb inflation and defend

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Connally, Shultz reported talking of leaving administration over economic inaction.
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the dollar but he declined to say what these proposals would be.

Indications that new economic restraints might have bipartisan backing came yesterday from Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield and Republican Leader Hugh Scott, who joined in a plea for administration action on the economy. Mansfield said the President will have the support of Congress "if he will face up to the problem."

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 President Nixon in 1969 after Sen. Henry Jackson (D-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 A. 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 vice chief of staff.

It was announced yesterday, however, that Haig will retire from active military duty on Aug. 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 other military-sounding phrases, Laird said yesterday.

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 relationships 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 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.

The announcement of Ziegler's new duties was a demonstration of what Warren called Mr. Nixon's "utmost faith in and respect for Ron Ziegler."

The White House has insisted ever since the resignations of Haldeman and Ehrlichman that Ziegler would not step down despite criticism that he had lost credibility as an administration spokesman.

"Ron's relationship with the President has grown to where he is one of the top staff members in the White House," Warren said.

The reorganization, confirming what has been the practice for the past several months, leaves Warren with the duty of deputy press secretary, Kenneth W. Clawson as deputy communications director and Andrew T. Falkiewicz as a deputy press secretary with responsibility for foreign journalists.

In another announcement yesterday Warren said that Charles Allen Wright, whom he described as a "constitutional specialist," had been employed as a \$150-a-day consultant to assist White House Counsel Leonard Garment on Watergate-related issues.