

President's Strategy A Secret

By Carroll Kilpatrick
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A White House spokesman yesterday declined to explain President Nixon's impeachment defense strategy and declared that the matter is too important to discuss in press conferences.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said, "Our strategy will become known as events unfold. This is much too serious a matter for me to stand here and parry back and forth."

But when asked if the President was still confident that the House would not vote to impeach him, Warren avoided a direct reply.

All he would say was that "we are expressing confidence in the constitutional process and that the facts will not support allegations against the President."

As recently as last Saturday, all White House spokesmen were maintaining that Mr. Nixon was sure the House would exonerate him. Now some aides are acknowledging privately that the President's chances in the House are slim to nonexistent.

As for a White House strategy, the external signs indicate that it has not been developed, although aides maintain that there is one and that, as Warren said, it will become known as events unfold.

Nevertheless, since the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment vote, the President has spent a substantial amount of his time reviewing tapes, he must turn over to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica.

Mr. Nixon postponed a scheduled meeting with his economic advisers yesterday to devote his time to studying tapes and assessing the impeachment situation.

The President's conclusion after evaluating the material that will be disclosed through the judge to

Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski could affect the development of a defense strategy.

The President has been secluded in his office most of the week listening to the tapes and conducting domestic and foreign business, Warren said. "The President will not resign," Warren said in answer to a question, and the same sentiment was echoed by other aides. They have consistently asserted that, as Mr. Nixon has said, he will insist upon carrying out the full constitutional process, which could mean a lengthy Senate trial.

Warren also denied reports that press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler has been silenced and will not speak publicly again on the impeachment issues. But Ziegler has not been seen by reporters since Mr. Nixon returned from California Sunday.

Last week, in California, Ziegler spoke frequently with reporters and aroused the ire of congressmen because he said Judiciary Committee counsel John Doar was acting as though he was before a kangaroo court.

When pressed on the President's plans to defend himself, Warren said there are no plans for the President to hold a news conference or to make an address to the country.

Meetings are held at the White House daily by senior staff members to discuss the President's defense, but, according to those who attend the meetings, Mr. Nixon makes all the final decisions.

Kenneth Cole, director of the Domestic Council, provided reporters with a glimpse into the President's attitude by saying that Mr. Nixon was in very low spirits from last August to December but is "in good spirits" today.

Declaring that the President is "very much interested in what the Domestic Council is doing, Cole said, "I believe his spirits are as good as at any time and better than a year ago."

From last August to December, the President's mood was "bad" and he "was down" in spirits, Cole said.