

FORD IS EXPECTED TO NAME GEN. HAIG NATO COMMANDER

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The White House Declines to
Comment on Report by 2
Administration Aides

NO IMMINENT MOVE SEEN

Third Official Says Post Is
One of Several Options
Now Being Explored

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—

Gen. Alexander M. Haig, Jr., chief of the White House staff, is expected to be appointed supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and of United States forces in Europe by President Ford, two authoritative Administration officials said today.

To take the post he will be recalled to active duty as a four-star Army general, a status from which he retired in August, 1973, three months after he replaced H. R. Halde- man as President Nixon's top White House aide, the officials said.

The White House said through a spokesman that it could not comment on the report. Another high Administration official said that President Ford was exploring several options concerning General Haig and that he wanted him to stay on for awhile. This official said that the decision was not imminent. But the NATO post was the most likely one for General Haig, he added.

Would Succeed Goodpaster

General Haig, who will be 50 years old in December, would succeed Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, 59. President Nixon named General Goodpaster supreme allied commander in Europe in March, 1969. The commander has the double function of overseeing the 15-member Atlantic defense community and the more than 300,000 United States servicemen stationed in Europe.

The officials who disclosed Mr. Ford's intention to shift General Haig said that they did not know when an official White House announcement would be made or even why the move was being contemplated.

Nor was it possible to learn immediately what factors determined the expected shift: Whether it was President Ford's wish to reshape the White House operation by eliminating the major holdovers from the Nixon Administration or General Haig's wish to return to a purely military job.

A White House official said he believed that it was primarily General Haig's desire to return to military duty that had prompted the exploration of new job opportunities for him.

In any case, the NATO post would provide a comfortable

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way for Mr. Ford to respond to some demands that General Haig, who was so intimately associated with President Nixon during the last 15 months of the Watergate scandal, be removed from the White House.

Last Aug. 14, only five days after he was sworn in, President Ford said through his press secretary, J. F. terHorst, that he had asked General Haig to stay as chief of the White House staff "for the duration," and Mr. terHorst added that Mr. Ford had requested General Haig to remain "indefinitely."

Last week General Haig said in a telephone interview that Mr. Ford had asked him "three times to stay" at his White House post.

One of two officials who confirmed the plan to appoint General Haig to the military post in Brussels said today that "President Ford has the highest regard for Al."

Aide to Kissinger

In 1969, General Haig joined the Nixon Administration as military adviser to Henry A. Kissinger, who was then assistant to the President for national security affairs. Two years later, General Haig was appointed vice chief of staff of the Army. He held that post until his current White House appointment on May 4, 1973.

During his last tour of Army duty General Haig made no secret of his desire to rise to higher military posts and he had his eye on the chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That post is currently filled by Gen. George S. Brown of the Air Force.

A Pentagon spokesman said that General Haig would have been eligible for the Joint Chiefs job, had he stayed in the Army,



NATO
Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, present NATO commander.

despite his relatively young age.

It appeared that the Ford Administration had already begun the delicate process of sounding out United States allies in NATO about the acceptability of General Haig as supreme commander. The first word of such moves came yesterday from a diplomatic source in Western Europe.

Asked how their governments might respond to the appointment of General Haig, two Western European Ambassadors said today they thought it would not be well-received because of his identification in European minds with Mr. Nixon's Watergate troubles and his downfall.

Soundings also have to be made in the Department of Defense with Secretary James R. Schlesinger, the Joint Chiefs'

and others concerned with NATO, a Pentagon spokesman said. In addition, General Haig would also have to receive Senate approval for the post, he said.

If he accepted the appointment General Haig would take a pay cut. His White House job pays him \$42,500 a year. The NATO chief gets the base pay for a full general, which is \$36,000. But the supreme commander receives generous allowances and quarters from the organization.

In returning to active duty General Haig would probably also become eligible for a larger share of his Army pension, a Pentagon spokesman said. On resignation from the Army a year ago his \$24,000-a-year pension was cut in half.