

SF EXAMINER

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An Aide's Aide Balked Hickel-Nixon Talk

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Former Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel's written request for a meeting to brief President Nixon last September on a just-ended tour of four nations was rejected in a White House letter signed by an assistant to an assistant.

The reply to Hickel's request, delayed three weeks in the writing and a month in delivery, bore the name of Hugh Sloan Jr., staff assistant to Special Presidential Assistant Dwight Chapin, the man who arranges Nixon's appointments.

Sloan's reply said it was "impossible for us to arrange an appointment for you." Copies of both letters were obtained by The Associated Press.

The incident followed by five months the now-famous letter to the President which Hickel wrote, as he later

complained, because he could not reach the President or his top aides for what he considered an urgent consultation.

The incident stirred widespread speculation that the President was isolated behind a "Prussian Guard" of White House aides.