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Planning to Clarify Calley Case Intervention Nixon

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WASHINGTON, April 8—

President Nixon intends to issue a "clarification" of his intervention in the Calley case, White House sources said today.

The sources refused to indicate when, where or how the President would clarify his position, or what aspect of his actions he felt he needed to clarify. Presumably, it would deal in some way with his decision to review personally the conviction of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr., who was found guilty of having murdered 22 Vietnamese civilians.

In addition, the sources said—again in an unspecified way—that the President would "pass judgment on the whole incident" at Mylai, not just Lieutenant Calley's part in it. Two other Army officers, Capt. Ernest L. Medina and Col. Oran K. Henderson, are still facing trial for their alleged roles at Mylai.

The Calley case "fell in on us," one of the sources recalled, "and the President tried to cool off public reaction."

Breakfast With Klein

Herbert G. Klein, the White House communications director, said at a breakfast meeting with reporters that there was no feeling in the White House that the President had erred in intervening. While lawyers might think Mr. Nixon's decision inappropriate, he added, the public considered it a good thing.

Still another White House official, who asked that his name not be used, said he thought the decision would ultimately be seen as a political liability for the President. Months from now when Mr. Nixon is faced with a judgment in the case, he suggested, support for Lieutenant Calley will have waned and the President will inevitably reopen old wounds by his action.

Democratic leaders, meanwhile, were in a quandary as to the political ramifications of the case. One said it was the "murkiest question that we've come across in a very long time."

Of the major Democratic Presidential hopefuls, only Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana—

election prospects by responding to the national groundswell of support for Lieutenant Calley.

But Joseph Califano, general counsel of the Democratic National Committee, took the opposite view. He said that Mr. Nixon's "interference" in the judicial process, together with his comments during the Manson Trial, would over the long range give him a public image of "un-Presidential behavior."

"I think the support for Calley is a temporary phenomenon," Mr. Califano added. "After a while, people will stop and think about what this man did. And when they do, it will make the war even more of an issue, which won't help Mr. Nixon." Representative Benjamin S. Rosenthal, Democrat of Queens, agreed, arguing that in the long run the "historic American reverence in the courts" would reassert itself. The heavy mail received by Congressmen and Senators, he said, has subdued their public statements for the moment, "but that won't last long."

Will Become Part of Debate

Ultimately, the Calley case will almost certainly become part of the general Vietnam debate, as have past episodes. As such, it will tend to be subordinated to the larger—and more politically charged—question of whether Mr. Nixon is able to end the war or at least reduce American casualties to the vanishing point.

Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama apparently intends to use the Calley case as a major theme in his expected bid for the Presidency in 1972 as a third-party candidate.

Mr. Wallace visited Lieutenant Calley in his quarters at Fort Benning after the verdict, and in a speech to the Alabama Legislature last week said that if he were President he would

grant him a pardon.

In addition to his racial themes, Governor Wallace has in past campaigns identified himself with the interests of the

"little guy," whom he has pictured as the victim of bureaucracy and the "interests." The Calley case could be made to fit with this populist rhetoric.