

Top White House Aides
Quit -- President Explains

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Nixon Calls for Truth-- Accepts Responsibility For Watergate Affair

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President Nixon told the nation last night he had no knowledge of political espionage or attempts to cover it up in the Watergate case but that he would accept full responsibility for what happened.

The President went on television and radio to explain his feelings after he received the resignations of three top staff members who have been implicated in the case—H. R. Halde- man, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III. He also accepted the resignation of Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

Last night Mr. Nixon was tense and grave. At the start of the speech he stumbled several times as he shuffled the pages from which he read. Afterward, technicians in the room said the President brushed tears from his eyes and said, "It wasn't easy."

COVERUP

As the President accepted the responsibility and pledged every effort to achieve justice in the case, he alleged wrongdoing or coverup attempts on the part of those he had delegated to run his 1972 presidential campaign and those he appointed to investigate the matter during the campaign. And he implied that his own election officials, in the Watergate espionage, were attempting to stop wrongdoing by the Democrats.

Mr. Nixon also said that hereafter the investigation of the Watergate matters would be delegated to his new attorney general, Elliott L. Richardson, while he, the President, turned his attention to grave foreign and domestic matters.

The speech, which came after weeks of growing tension at the White House as developments in the Watergate scandals implicated administration figures, was an emotional appeal to save the



UPI Telephoto

ELLIOT RICHARDSON
New attorney general

tions by specific individuals who committed those actions, those who committed those actions must of course bear the liability and pay the penalty," he said.

BLAME

"For the fact that alleged improper actions took place within the White House or within my campaign organization, the easiest course would be for me to blame

those whom I delegated the responsibility to run the campaign. But that would be the cowardly thing to do."

"I will not place the blame on subordinates," he continued, his voice breaking slightly, "on people whose zeal exceeded their judgment and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right. In any organization the man at the top must bear the responsibility. That responsibility, therefore, belongs here in this office. I accept it."

The President did not specify in what way he would accept the responsibility. But he made it clear that the guilty should be punished and he would not stand in the way.

"There can be no white-wash at the White House," he said.

LIES

Mr. Nixon suggested that his own investigators had lied to him. He said there had been "an effort to conceal the facts both from the public — from you — and from me."

The President's highly

emotional appeal was characteristic of Nixon speeches of the past in which he has sought to defend himself from attacks. While accepting the blame, he said there had been "campaigning excesses" in both major parties and he left the implication that, in the Watergate case, one side, the Republicans, may have been trying to prevent the excesses of the other, the Democrats.

"Two wrongs do not make a right," Mr. Nixon said.

ELEVATE

After accepting the responsibility, Mr. Nixon sought to elevate himself above the Watergate issue in order to better conduct his office. He said that prosecution of the Watergate case would be delegated to Richardson, the new attorney general.

"I know that, as attorney general, Elliot Richardson will be both fair and he will be fearless in pursuing this case wherever it leads," he said. "There is vital work to be done toward our goal of a lasting structure of peace in the world, work that cannot wait — work that I must do."

Reciting a number of international initiatives that are under way — arms control, detente with the major Communist powers, the maintaining of peace in Southeast Asia and the Middle East — and his goals of full employment and prosperity at home, Mr. Nixon said he is determined to pursue those ends.

GOALS

He recited these goals that he said he had written last Christmas Eve:

- Peace in the world.
- Full opportunity for every American.
- Jobs for all who can work and generous help for those who cannot.
- Establishment of a "climate of decency and civility."
- "To make this a land in which each person can dare to dream."

integrity of the presidency for the 1481 days — Mr. Nixon's count — remaining in his term.

PRAYERS

"Tonight I ask for your prayers to help me in everything that I do," Mr. Nixon said at the end. "God bless America, and God bless each and every one of you."

He gave the country the explanation that American leaders had been urging him to do for months.

First, he sought to estab-

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lish his own innocence. For the first time in his long political career, he said, he had not run his own campaign in 1972. He delegated that responsibility because he, as a candidate for re-election, had more important duties — the running of his office and the seeking of peace in Vietnam.

APPALLED

Last June, when he heard of the burglary and bugging of the Democratic National Committee through news reports he was appalled, he said, and appointed officials to look into it for any wrongdoing.

Up until March of this year, he said he believed no one in the White House was involved. Since learning that members of his staff were implicated, Mr. Nixon said, he has spent much of his time attempting to learn the truth.

For specific criminal ac-