

# Richardson Draft Surprises Pentagon

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President Nixon's draft of Defense Secretary Elliot L. Richardson to be Attorney General, while sending a shock wave of surprise through the top ranks of the Pentagon, was not expected to disrupt the management of a defense program that has a momentum of its own.

At least momentarily the direction of the Pentagon will fall to William P. Clements Jr., a Texas oilman who has served under Mr. Richardson as Deputy Secretary of Defense. On defense policy, Mr. Clements is regarded as being considerably more conservative than Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Clements figured in the immediate speculation as a possible successor to Mr. Richardson, although it was understood he would be willing to remain as the No. 2 man in the Pentagon if the President should choose another person to be Secretary of Defense.

For the moment, the President was not tipping his hand on his plans for the Pentagon, and ultimately his choice may depend on whether he wants a business manager, such as Mr. Clements, to run the Pentagon, or a man more skilled in the political ways of Washington, such as Mr. Richardson, who could guide the defense budget over the Congressional hurdles.

The departure of Mr. Richardson, after only three months in the Pentagon, was the first direct impact of the Watergate scandal upon the business of the Defense Department. While some of Mr. Richardson's appointments of top officials had been delayed, basi-

ally the business of the Pentagon had gone on normally.

Mr. Richardson is leaving the Pentagon before he could have any direct impact on the defense program and at a time when the first grumblings of criticism about him were beginning to rise in the liberal ranks in Congress.

In a political irony that has not escaped him, Mr. Richardson's one major act as Secretary of Defense was to close some 40 military bases, including the Boston Naval Shipyard—an action that beclouded his political future in his home state of Massachusetts though perhaps not nationally.

As they have watched Mr. Richardson move from one job to another within the Nixon Administration and willingly accept policy laid down by the White House, some of his longtime friends have come to the conclusion that he is guided by a political ambition aimed at the Presidency.

## Posture on the Military

Mr. Richardson found himself in the position of defending a defense policy he inherited while he tried to develop his own.

To win the confidence of the military and the Congressional armed services committees, who viewed with some skepticism the appointment of a Harvard-educated Bostonian to be Defense Secretary, he deliberately emphasized from the outset that he was an advocate of a "strong national defense" posture.

But in the process, he engendered growing uneasiness

among Congressional critics of the defense budget, who were beginning to wonder whether he could or would chart any new directions in defense policy.

In the opinion of their subordinates, both Mr. Richardson and Mr. Clements, after an inevitable period of education, were just beginning to get their hands around the job of managing the Pentagon.

In the working relationship that was evolving between the two, Mr. Richardson concentrated on over-all policy and relations with Congress, while Mr. Clements specialized in weapons procurement programs as well as representing the Defense Department in subcommittee meetings of the National Security Council.

Like Mr. Richardson, Mr. Clements, in his caretaker role at the Pentagon, inherits a defense policy already set by the Administration, with the basic structure, budget and weapons programs all determined.

Mr. Richardson summed up the task facing Mr. Clements: "Our biggest difficulty now is not starting new programs or policies but getting the existing ones through Congress."

Mr. Richardson was playing tennis yesterday with a newspaper editor when he received a telephone call instructing him that he was to get on a helicopter and fly to Camp David, Md., to meet with the President. According to associates, Mr. Richardson's first hint that he was to shift from the Defense Department to the Justice Department had come Saturday, when the President talked with him by telephone.

Mr. Richardson told a surprised staff meeting at the Pentagon this morning that he would be leaving the Defense Department "soon" to go to the Justice Department.

"Everyone at the meeting was dumfounded," one participant in the meeting said. "He was just getting hold of the job, and it never occurred to any of us that he would leave."

Later Mr. Richardson issued a brief statement saying he had "accepted the President's nomination to be Attorney General because I believe I have an overriding duty to do so."

Officially, Mr. Richardson will remain as Secretary of Defense until his nomination as Attorney General is approved by the Senate. But unofficially, Mr. Richardson was expected to start concentrating immediately on the investigation of the Watergate case and the problems of the Justice Department.

Today, for example, he spent considerable time talking to Justice Department officials as well as individual Senators, trying, as he explained to reporters, "to develop some familiarity with the situations confronting the department."



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