

Senate Committee to Call 2 Nixon Aides

By Peter Osnos

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate select committee investigating the Watergate bugging conspiracy will call former presidential assistants H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman when it begins public hearings in mid-May, committee sources said yesterday.

Sam Dash, the committee's chief counsel, declined to comment yesterday on who will be appearing at the hearings, but said that "all relevant witnesses" would be called. He said the committee staff is moving "full speed ahead and 24 hours a day" towards a starting date for the hearings of about May 15.

In a telephone interview, Dash confirmed that Haldeman and Ehrlichman will be meeting with him later this week. He contradicted, however, statements in the resignation letters of both men as released yesterday by the White House that the meetings were at their request.

"We made the contacts," Dash said. He said that in the middle of last week the committee approached Leonard Garment, then serving as special consultant to the President, about speaking to Haldeman and Ehrlichman and were referred to John J. Wilson, the personal attorney retained by the White House aides.

Besides the session with Dash, Haldeman and Ehrlichman said in their resignation letters that they would be meeting with federal prosecutors. They said that those meetings, too, were at their initiative. Sources close to the prosecution said the two White House aides had "made themselves available" through Wilson.

The prosecutors, Assistant

U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert, Seymour Glanzer and Donald Campbell, have met privately with a number of former White House aides and Nixon campaign officials in recent weeks and several have subsequently been called before the grand jury investigating the Watergate bugging and the alleged cover-up that followed.

Among those who have talked to the prosecutors is John W. Dean III, who was fired yesterday as counsel to the President. It is he who reportedly has most directly implicated Haldeman and Ehrlichman in the Watergate affair.

The federal grand jury investigation into the Watergate is making substantial headway, according to Justice Department sources, but the prosecutors are said to be building their cases "methodically" and do not expect indictments to be returned before the start of the Senate hearings.

The two outgoing official investigations, the Senate's and the grand jury's, are not linked in any way, but Sen. San Ervin (D-N.C.), chairman of the committee, said on April 19 that the hearings might have to be postponed if several key witnesses were indicted.

The possibility of any postponement is now considered very remote and committee sources said that the senators are very anxious to get the hearings under way.

Two members of the Senate committee, Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) and Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) said in telephone interviews yesterday that the resignations at the White House and Justice Department would not alter

the present course of their investigation.

The committee's mandate goes beyond the bugging of the Watergate headquarters of the Democratic National Committee and the alleged cover-up of the incident and includes all aspects of the political espionage and sabotage reportedly undertaken on President Nixon's behalf during last year's campaign.

"It's obviously an important chapter in the unfolding Watergate story," Weicker said of yesterday's resignations, "but the full story remains to be told."

Sen. Baker said the committee will next meet Wednesday morning, which will be its first session since April 16, the day before President Nixon disclosed he had found "major developments" in the case.

After the President's announcement, there was speculation that indictments might follow quickly. Justice Department sources said, however, that the prosecutors are proceeding slowly through the thicket of charges and countercharges made by the President's associates.

The prosecutors, sources said, are working on the "investigative assumption" that those brought before the grand jury so far have been involved in illegal activities, but it is now necessary to amass sufficient evidence to support that assumption in court. Among those who have testified are former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who headed up the Nixon re-election committee at the time of the Watergate bugging, and Herbert W. Kalmbach, President Nixon's personal lawyer.

Convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy has refused to testify even though he has been sentenced to an additional jail term as a result.

Liddy has been described in court as the "arch-conspirator and boss" of the seven men already convicted in connection with the Watergate bugging and his testimony is considered essential in establishing links between the crime and higher officials.

The grand jury is continuing its deliberations this week.

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Sen. Percy Cites 'Intimidation' By Ehrlichman

John D. Ehrlichman and other top White House aides used threats, pressure and intimidation in an attempt to change his votes on key issues before the Senate, Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) said yesterday.

Percy said Ehrlichman warned him that he would pay a price for voting against the antiballistic missile system that was sought by the administration in 1969.

"I was told by John Ehrlichman that this (vote) would cost me the National Home Ownership Foundation, which I had worked so many years to establish," Percy said.

The foundation, authorized by the Housing Act of 1968, was designed to oversee the operations of new federal housing subsidy programs for low- and moderate-income families.