

FBI Guarding the Files In White House Offices

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Washington

FBI agents moved into position yesterday to guard the files of three presidential assistants who are leaving because of the Watergate case.

The appearance of the agents was only one sign of the changing order at the White House on the morning after President Nixon's speech on the Watergate scandal.

There was a new air about the place as Ronald L. Ziegler, presidential press secretary, apologized to the Washington Post, promised frequent news conferences and hinted at a new staff structure.

According to Ziegler, the FBI agents are guarding the files of H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III 24 hours a day. No one is permitted to examine or remove papers from the files, he added, unless an agent is present.

This "safeguarding procedure," the press secretary said, was not meant "to cast aspersions on any individual."

In fact, Ziegler added, Haldeman and Ehrlichman had agreed to the procedure.

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But their acquiescence could not obscure the fall from grace of the two men who, until their resignations Monday, had more access to the President than did any other public official. Now they are unable to look at their papers alone.

LEAVING

The two were seen leaving the White House at mid-morning, seated in the back seat of an official limousine, with papers stacked on their laps. The papers were reportedly culled from their files, under supervision, to help them defending themselves before the grand jury

and Senate investigators, should they be subpoenaed.

The plan to protect the files was decided upon at a meeting Monday of Leonard Garment, who temporarily took over Dean's duties as White House counsel; Elliot L. Richardson, whom Mr. Nixon has nominated as attorney general and William D. Ruckelshaus, acting director of the FBI.

A White House statement said the agents has been put into place "to make sure that access and removal of any files were supervised." The Watergate case has produced charges that vital documents were removed from the White House and destroyed.

Haldeman and Ehrlichman were at their desks yesterday preparing for a transition period that could last as long as three weeks.

DEAN

But Dean was nowhere to be found. White House sources said staff members failed to reach him Monday to tell him that his "resignation" — which he never wrote — was being accepted. In fact, they said, he was ousted, and presumably learned his fate from news reports.

Mr. Nixon's mood swung from joviality to anger as the day went on. Waiting to welcome Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany yesterday morning, he joked with photographers about his weight. Then he joked with Brandt about the chancellor's lack of luck on a fishing expedition.

But at a Cabinet meeting

yesterday afternoon, the President rose to excoriate Senator Charles H. Percy (Rep.-Ill.), according to an official who was present. He said, among other things, that Percy, who is thought to have White House ambitions, would never be elected President.

RESOLUTION

The official said that Mr. Nixon was angered by a resolution, introduced by Percy and passed by the Senate yesterday, calling for the appointment of a special prosecutor in the case, subject to Senate approval.

The President's fury, the official said, was aroused not only because Mr. Nixon is opposed to the idea of a special prosecutor, but also because he thought Richardson ought to be able to decide the question without pressure from party colleagues.

At the regular press briefing, in fact, Ziegler stressed that Richardson has a firm mandate to accept or reject the idea of a "special supervisory prosecutor" mentioned by Mr. Nixon Monday night. And Ziegler suggested that Richardson had broad latitude in interpreting that phrase.

IMMUNITY

Ziegler also suggested that the President might be backing away from his April 17 rejection of immunity from prosecution for major figures in the case. Asked whether Mr. Nixon had changed his mind, the press secretary said the question was one that "Mr. Richardson should address."

The President's opposition

to immunity has introduced a complication into the prosecution of the case, with investigators complaining that Dean was reluctant to tell all without a grant of immunity. Some legal scholars have accused Mr. Nixon of sheathing a major prosecution weapon.

On other topics related to the Watergate case, Ziegler said:

- That to his knowledge, Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's personal lawyer, is no longer handling business for Mr. Nixon. Kalmbach admitted to the FBI that he had paid \$30,000 to Donald H. Segretti for espionage activities against the Democrats.

- That the President might hold a news conference next week.

- That it had not yet been decided whether Haldeman and Ehrlichman would be replaced, with "the new men carrying on in the same way." The statement left open the possibility — considered a probability by some sources — that Mr. Nixon will create a new White House staff system, without the centralization it had under Haldeman.