

Immunity Up to Richardson

Nixon Switches

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon has given Attorney General-designate Elliot L. Richardson authority to decide whether to grant immunity to any present or former government officials who are to testify on the Watergate case, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said yesterday.

Richardson has "total authority" to conduct the investigation and to decide on a prosecutor as well as on the question of immunity, Ziegler said.

This would appear to be a reversal of the position the President took April 17 when he said he had told investigators that "no individual holding, in the past or at present, a position of major importance in the administration should be given immunity from prosecution."

(The Senate select committee investigating the Watergate affair voted yesterday to start proceedings to grant limited immunity to former White House counsel John W. Dean III. The committee already has voted to request limited immunity for former deputy Nixon campaign aide Jeb Stuart Magruder if he is called to testify, a committee source said yesterday.)

Mr. Nixon has largely taken himself out of the investigation of the Watergate, Ziegler said. He said the President has not conferred with Richardson or Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Peter-

See **PRESIDENT, A6, Col. 1**

PRESIDENT, From A1

sen, formerly the Justice Department official in charge of the Watergate case, for four or five days.

The President is working on the reorganization of the White House staff and other governmental matters but is spending "very little" time on the investigation, Ziegler said.

Emphatically denying rumors that Mr. Nixon might consider resigning, Ziegler said "the President intends to and is proceeding with the work of this government and administration."

"He is continuing with his work and will continue with it," the press secretary said. "There are many things he feels should be done in the next 3½ years."

Noting that national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger has been meeting in Moscow with Soviet officials and that a Soviet-American summit meeting is expected here soon, Ziegler said the President has received and replied to a number of messages from Kissinger.

The President also is working on other foreign and domestic matters, Zieg-

ler emphasized. Mr. Nixon is scheduled to speak tonight at a Republican fund-raising dinner here and may throw new light on his plans.

Ziegler declined to provide any details on the 2¼-hour meeting Mr. Nixon had Monday in Key Biscayne, Fla., with former Treasury Secretary John B. Connally.

But it was understood that while Connally, a new convert to the Republican Party, does not intend to accept a Cabinet post or other major position, he may undertake another special presidential assignment.

Ziegler said there was nothing he could say about Connally's discussions with the President "at this time."

Asked about further White House reorganization plans, Ziegler said he was not sure the President would name a single individual to take over John D. Ehrlichman's job as special adviser on domestic affairs.

The President already has given some new authority to Vice President Agnew and has turned over some of Ehrlichman's former assignments to Roy L. Ash, director of the Office of Management and Budget, and other officials.

In answer to questions, Ziegler extended the scope of the White House statement Monday proclaiming the President's innocence in the Watergate break-in and the alleged cover-up that followed.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren issued a statement Monday declaring that "any suggestion that the President participated in any cover-up activity or activities is untrue."

When Ziegler was told that the statement did not deny Mr. Nixon's "awareness" of a cover-up, he said the original statement "was drawn to make a distinction between participation and awareness."

The statement was issued because of allegations that had been made regarding a cover-up and was intended to deny the President's involvement, he said.

The Monday statement also said that Mr. Nixon had never authorized the offering of clemency to anyone involved in the Watergate case and knew nothing about the Watergate break-in in advance.