

Ziegler Says Reports That Nixon Tried to Block Ellsberg Data Are Unfounded

# Ziegler Says Report

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By JOHN HERBERS MAY 10 1973  
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WASHINGTON, May 9—After more than a day of silence, the White House sought today to put down reports that President Nixon had tried to prevent the Justice Department from providing to the Pentagon-papers trial in Los Angeles information on the burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist.

"Any reference or suggestion made by anyone that the President would have proceeded in any other way than to provide information to the court is completely unfounded," Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said.

Yesterday, Mr. Ziegler had "no comment" on a report in The New York Times that the President, invoking national security, sought on at least two occasions to prevent the release to the court of details of the burglary, according to sources close to the Watergate case.

Today, after the report was published in The Washington Post and elsewhere, Mr. Ziegler said:

"I am not going to comment on details of stories which have appeared which are based on various sources. I will simply make this observation: The fact of the matter is that this material was provided at the direction of the President."

He then added the statement about "unfounded" reference or suggestion.

The newspaper reports said that the President on both occasions sought at first to block sending of the information to the court on the ground of national security but that he later reversed himself after Justice Department officials protested. The information included disclosure that the burglary had been authorized by White House staff members investigating the release of the Pentagon papers in 1971.

Mr. Ziegler's statement today reflected a posture that the White House has assumed for the last few days and apparently intends to maintain in the weeks ahead: Silence on all matters that have any connection with official investigations of the Watergate case except for issuance of denials to protect the integrity of the President.

In long sessions with reporters, Mr. Ziegler has declined to answer scores of questions relating to the Watergate case, saying that comments from the White House could prejudice

the judicial processes. He said he did so on the advice of Leonard Garment, the new White House counsel, and Attorney General-Designate Elliot L. Richardson.

Mr. Ziegler, however, did confirm that the White House and the Justice Department were seeking the return of nine classified documents that the former White House counsel, John W. Dean 3d, removed from his office and put in a bank vault.

Mr. Garment has told Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, that the Administration would not object to the court keeping copies of the documents.

"We want our papers back," Mr. Ziegler said. "We don't know what the contents are, but they are White House classified documents and we want them back."

Sources close to the Watergate case said the documents were believed to pertain to national security matters and probably had no bearing on the Watergate case.

Mr. Dean was not the only departing Presidential aide who carried papers from the White House. H. R. Haldeman, who was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman the President's former assistant for domestic affairs, were seen leaving the White House with papers after their resignations on April 30.

Asked if the White House was concerned about those papers or any others that might have been taken, Mr. Ziegler said that Mr. Garment had satisfied himself that no important papers had been taken by Mr. Haldeman or Mr. Ehrlichman.

The day after their resignations, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation were stationed in the White House offices to protect the files. Mr. Ziegler said today that all the files pertinent to the Watergate case had been moved to "a central location" and were under strict supervision.

In response to requests, Mr. Ziegler compiled a breakdown of letters and telegrams received at the White House since Mr. Nixon's April 30 television talk on the Watergate case. He said that 4,496 telegrams supported the President and 1,715 were negative; the mail was running 700 letters a day, about 3 to 1 in support of the President.

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