

# How Nixon Got Report Of Probe

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The only report that President Nixon received last year on possible staff involvement in the Watergate break-in was an informal oral report from John D. Ehrlichman, senior White House official, reported yesterday.

Shortly after the June 17 break-in, the sources said, the President ordered Ehrlichman, then his chief domestic adviser, to set in motion an investigation to determine whether any member of the White House staff had been involved.

Ehrlichman delegated John W. Dean III, then the presidential counsel, to conduct the investigation, the sources said, and Ehrlichman subsequently delivered an oral report to the President.

## ASSURANCES

The sources said it was on the basis of Ehrlichman's assurances that Mr. Nixon said in his news conference August 29 that Dean had conducted "a complete investigation of all leads," and that he could assure the country that "no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident."

The sources said that this account of the situation was based on conversations with the President within the last 48 hours.

In keeping with the White House staff system, the sources explained, the President did not talk directly with Dean about the inquiry either before the investigation or after it.

"The word was passed through Ehrlichman," said one White House staff member, "and we all assumed

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that Dean was carrying out his orders."

Since then, the sources continued, the President has concluded, without identifying anyone as the culprit, that the investigation — and Ehrlichman's report on it — was a seriously deficient effort.

The sources supplied Mr. Nixon's account of the investigation — a crucial element in the attempt to determine whether the President had any knowledge of the Watergate episode and the subsequent attempt to cover it up — after Dean had been widely quoted as saying that he had never submitted a report.

None of the sources challenged that assertion, but they said that there was no question that an investigation had been ordered. Furthermore, they asserted,

Mr. Nixon had operated on the assumption, as he said in his televised speech of April 30, that his orders had been totally complied with.

## RELUCTANCE

Until yesterday, persons retaining the President's confidence had been reluctant to supply his version of the episode, either publicly or privately. Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, had turned aside all questions on the subject on the ground that he could not make statements that might interfere with anyone's civil liberties.

However, after a news briefing yesterday morning in which he was bombarded with questions — the climax of a series of such briefings that, according to correspondents, have surpassed all earlier ones in acrimony — the sources agreed to set

forth the President's position.

Their accounts pictured Mr. Nixon, as have his public utterances, as the victim of inept investigations.

## PAYROLL

The sources also disclosed that Dean, Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, all of whom resigned from the White House staff on April 30, would leave the federal payroll as of yesterday evening.

Ziegler had said, in res-

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ponse to daily questions, that the three men were continuing to report to their offices each day to assist with "transitional duties." It was learned, however, that Dean has not visited or telephoned the White House since his resignation, which had been

demanding by Mr. Nixon, and that he has in fact performed no duties since that date.

The sources said that the men have been kept on full salary until the expiration of the current pay period. With the concurrence of the President, it was said, they were paid on a "compassionate basis," much as those discharged from corporations or other enterprises are usually paid for two weeks or a month after their departure.

## TREATMENT

Dean was paid even though — unlike the two others — he did not appear at his office, the sources said, because Mr. Nixon did not want to point an accusatory finger at him by treating him differently from his colleagues.

In discussing the present situation with regard to the Watergate affair and asso-

ciated activities, the sources were unable to supply an account of the activities within the White House between the time that Judge William Matthew Byrne Jr., presiding at the Pentagon papers trial in Los Angeles, learned of widespread wiretaps on reporters and government officials and the discovery of wiretap logs in the office safe of Ehrlichman last Friday.

## SAFE

Ziegler said that Mr. Nixon had not known THAT THE PAPERS WERE IN Ehrlichman's safe until after their discovery.

When asked why Ehrlichman, who had said he knew that the documents were there, had not alerted the President or others when he learned that Judge Byrne was asking for them, he said that he was not authorized to reply to such questions.