

A New Nixon Statement --  
He Tells His Roles, Motives

# President Admits Some Coverup on Watergate --For 'National Security'

N.Y. Times Service

Washington

President Nixon conceded yesterday that there had been "wide-ranging efforts" in the White House to conceal some aspects of the Watergate case, but he said those actions stemmed from his legitimate interest in protecting national security.

In a 4000-word statement, which was both apologetic and defensive, Mr. Nixon declared he had no intention of resigning the presidency, saying:

"I will not abandon my responsibilities. I will continue to do the job I was elected to do."

As for his own part, Mr. Nixon reiterated his innocence in the Watergate burglary and its coverup but

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conceded that he had asked his associates not to let the investigation of the case disclose covert intelligence operations conducted in the interest of national security.

### Suggestion

He suggested that his closest associates, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, both of whom resigned April 30, may well have carried his instructions on protecting the national security to illegal attempts at covering up the case.

"It now appears that there were persons who may have gone beyond my directives and sought to expand on my efforts to protect the national security operations in order to clear up any involvement they or certain others might have had in the Watergate," Mr. Nixon said.

The statement was released late yesterday afternoon in an atmosphere of great tension that has been building in the White House as the Watergate disclosures have mounted. It was issued, the President said, because of "grossly misleading impressions of many of the facts as they relate both to my own role and to certain unrelated activities involving national security."

### Depth

The President's statement went much further than he had before in conceding White House involvement; it presented a marked contrast to the White House posture of "no involvement" of only 1½ months ago and it contained new, and more humble, acceptance of responsibility. He said:

"To the extent that I may in any way have contributed to the climate in which they took place, I did not intend to; to the extent that I failed to prevent them, I should have been more vigilant."

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, in a heated session with reporters following release of the statement, said the President would appear before the press in "the very near future" to answer further

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to the Watergate charges.

Leonard Garment, the new White House counsel, said one reason for releasing a detailed statement yesterday was to meet "the legitimate concerns" of political leaders of both parties that the President should be less seclusive and secretive.

The President and his aides seemed to be signaling an end to a period of passiveness on Mr. Nixon's part in the Watergate case, a posture uncharacteristic of Mr. Nixon in past crises.

Garment said the Watergate case and related matters were so complicated and involved that it had taken a long time to sort out the facts and, in effect, build a legal case for the White House.

Yesterday's statement constituted an outline, with some of the details still vague, that is expected to be followed in building a defense for the President in the weeks and months ahead.

First, the President sought to separate his own moves, in protecting national security, from the Watergate burglary and other illegal activities that stemmed from both the Watergate and the investigative efforts for security.

He acknowledged that in 1969 "a special program of wiretaps" had been set up to prevent leaks of secret information important to the new President's foreign policy initiatives. He said there were "fewer than 20 taps" and these were terminated in February, 1971.

In 1970, the administration was concerned about a wave of bombings, explosions, campus disruptions and other violence sweeping the nation in connection with anti-war protests and decided a better intelligence operation was needed. He appointed J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the FBI, as chairman of an interagency intelligence committee to prepare recommendations.

On June 25 of that year,

Mr. Nixon said, the committee submitted a report that included recommendations for resuming "certain intelligence operations that had been suspended in 1966. These in turn had included authorization for surreptitious entry — breaking and entering, in effect—on specified categories of targets in specified situations related to national security."

### RECONSIDERED

But he said that, on reconsideration, Hoover had opposed the plan and it was never put in effect. "It was this unused plan and related documents that John Dean (former White House counsel) removed from the White House and placed in a safe deposit box," Mr. Nixon said. The White House has asked for the return of the document on ground that it contains top secret matters on national security.

The President also acknowledged that in 1971, because of concern about continued leaks in foreign policy matters, a small intelligence unit called "The Plumbers" was set up. It was this unit that was responsible for the burglarizing of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Mr. Nixon said he told a member of that unit, Egil Krogh "that as a matter of first priority, the unit should find out all it could about Mr. Ellsberg's associates and his motives."

"Because of the extreme gravity of the situation, and not then knowing what additional national secrets Mr. Ellsberg might disclose, I did impress upon Mr. Krogh the vital importance to the national security of his assignment. I did not authorize and had no knowledge of any illegal means to be used to achieve this goal.

"However, because of the emphasis I put on the crucial importance of protect-



ing the national security, I can understand how highly motivated individuals could have felt justified in engaging in specific activities that I would have disapproved had they been brought to my attention."

There have been reports that Mr. Nixon, citing national security, twice opposed the release to the Ellsberg court of information regarding the burglary of the Los Angeles psychiatrist. Mr. Nixon said yesterday that when the matter was brought to his attention he directed that the information be transmitted to the court.

#### "SURPRISE"

On the Watergate break-in, which occurred in June 1972, Mr. Nixon said again that it came to him as "a complete surprise" and he had no inkling that any such illegal activity had been planned by anyone connected with his campaign.

"Within a few days, however, I was advised that there was a possibility of CIA involvement in some way," he said. Garment and other aides would not say who so advised the President.

"It did seem to me possible that, because of the involvement of former CIA personnel, and because some of their apparent associations, the investigation could lead to the uncovering of covert CIA operations totally unrelated to the Watergate break-in."

He noted at this point that one of the suspects, later convicted, was E. Howard Hunt, who had been a member of "the plumbers."

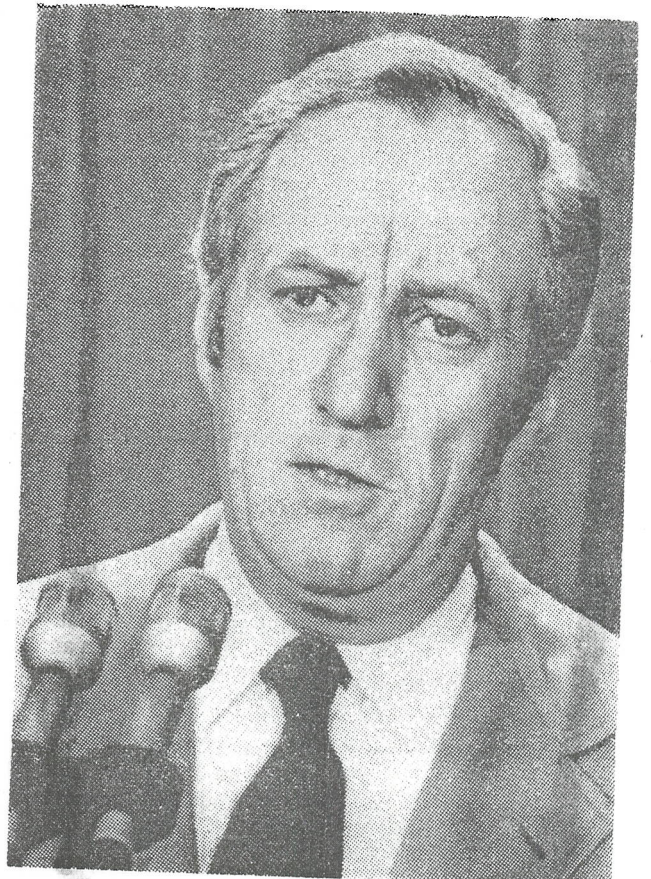
"Therefore, I was concerned that the Watergate investigation might well lead to an inquiry into the activities of the special investigations unit itself."

He felt it was important, Mr. Nixon said, "to avoid disclosure of the details of the national security matters with which the group was concerned. I knew that once the existence of the group became known, it would lead inexorably to a discussion of these matters, some of which remain, even today, highly sensitive."

His aides would not ex-

pand on what those matters might be.

"I wanted justice done with regard to Watergate," Mr. Nixon said, "but in the scale of national priorities with which I had to deal—and not at the same time having any idea of the extent of political abuse which Watergate reflected—I also had to be deeply concerned with ensuring that neither the covert operation or the CIA nor the operations of the special investigations unit should be compromised."



UPI Telephoto

LEONARD GARMENT BRIEFED NEWSMEN  
The acting White House counsel