

Nixon Militant About Watergate



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IN PRIVATE, President Nixon has become militant about Watergate. Trusted aides are putting together evidence that subversives were conspiring to undermine the political system.

These aides are trying to show that the threat of subversion and violence during the 1972 campaign justified extreme counter measures.

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IT IS quite true that the White House was flooded with scare stories on the eve of the 1972 campaign. Most of them came from Robert Mardian, then the Justice Department's internal security chief, who worked himself into a state of political paranoia.

He began chasing subversive shadows with such a vengeance that his counterespionage efforts took on the dimensions of a police-state operation. He bombarded his superiors with warnings of civil disorders and political disruptions. Among those who received his intelligence reports were the Watergate conspirators.

We have obtained access to some of these hush-hush reports, which White House aides are also searching for evidence for the President's counterattack. As early as we could determine from the

dozens of documents we have examined, however, the dire warnings turned out to be highly inflated.

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TYPICAL was a January 18, 1972, memo to Mardian from the chief of his analysis and evaluation section, John L. Martin, reviewing "current intelligence." The "principal objective" of the "antiwar leaders," he warned ominously, was to disrupt the Republican convention and to defeat President Nixon.

"The disruption of the Republican Convention represents the final phase of a three-phase program designed to defeat President Nixon in the 1972 presidential election," declared the intelligence analysis.

"Phase one was the people's grand jury demonstration held in Washington, D.C., on October 25 1971. Phase two will consist of individuals following President Nixon's campaign around the country urging his defeat.

"Phase three consists of a plan to have 500,000 to 1 million people attend the Republican National Convention in an attempt to deny President Nixon the Republican Party nomination."

Mardian's nightmare never materialized.