

Leaders Defend Him

GOP Cheers for Nixon

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Washington

President Nixon received a standing ovation from 22 Republican senators and representatives yesterday after he again invoked the name of national security in connection with the Watergate case.

Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania conveyed the President's remarks to reporters as the GOP leaders rallied around the President and echoed his latest defense — that White House efforts to conceal some aspects of the Watergate case stemmed from the President's legitimate concerns about security leaks

and exposing covert intelligence operations.

Yesterday's White House gathering was a regular GOP leadership meeting with the President except that it had been expanded to include more members of Congress as well as George Bush, Republican national chairman, and two Cabinet members — Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz and Secretary of the Interior Rogers, C. B. Morton.

Most of the two-hour meeting concerned legislation before Congress.

Asked if the Watergate case was discussed, however, Scott replied:

"I will read you the exact notes on it and this is all

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that was said by anybody. The President: 'Our negotiations with the PRC (People's Republic of China) and the USSR were highly secret and they are now. Leaking of information imperils negotiations and we have to continue measures to ensure the secrecy.' He then said he would appreciate our support, and he left to a stand-

ing ovation of all persons present."

In a 4000-word statement Tuesday, the President conceded that there had been "wide-ranging efforts" in the White House to conceal wrong-doing in the political espionage of last year's presidential election but that those actions stemmed from his instructions not to let the Watergate investigation interfere with national security matters.

"I have full confidence in the President," said Scott, who had been reported unhappy with Mr. Nixon's handling of the case in the past.

"I am satisfied he told the truth to the best of his honest recollection. And I hope that the President of the United States will receive the same credence that is sometimes given to thieves who purloin documents." He indicated he was referring to John W. Dean III, the ousted White House counsel who is seeking immunity for his testimony in the case.

Last night Mr. Nixon left by auto for his Camp David, Md., retreat to prepare his speech for today's big White House dinner for returned Vietnam prisoners of war.



AP Wirephoto
President Nixon entered Blair House where he met with party leaders