

AIDE SAID TO URGE NIXON TO OUST 2

**Petersen Reportedly Asked
Suspensions of Haldeman
and Ehrlichman April 15**

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WASHINGTON, June 22 — Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen urged President Nixon on April 15 to suspend John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman immediately because of their involvement in the Watergate scandal, sources close to the case said today.

Mr. Nixon announced the "resignations" of the two officials two weeks later, on April 30, but emphasized that his action should not be "seen by anyone as evidence of any wrongdoing by either one."

At a meeting on April 15, the sources said, Mr. Petersen and Richard G. Kleindienst, the Attorney General then, gave the President a briefing on new evidence that had been uncovered by Federal prosecutors.

The evidence allegedly showed that Mr. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff, and Mr. Ehrlichman, the former domestic adviser, had been leaders of a widespread cover-up of the bugging of the Democratic headquarters in June, 1972.

Praise of Aides Recalled

In his April 30 speech on Watergate, Mr. Nixon described Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman as "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know."

"Each of these men has demonstrated a spirit of selfishness and dedication that I have seldom seen equaled," the President said in a separate statement. "Their contributions to the work of this Administration have been enormous."

A high White House official, asked why the President waited two weeks before requesting the resignations, said only that "there would be no comment at this time."

Other sources with close White House connections said, however, that Mr. Nixon had been angered and distressed by the report from Mr. Petersen, whom he placed in charge of the Watergate inquiry one month before.

In the two weeks following his meeting with Mr. Petersen and Mr. Kleindienst, the President developed a very active policy of playing one White House aide off against another, "one source said. "He was creating an environment in which the prosecution could carry out its investigation."

'Used Period Wisely'

"When the whole story unfolds," this source added, "it will become very evident that the President used that period [between April 15 and April 30] very wisely to help the Government develop evidence."

This account of Mr. Nixon's attitude and activity could not be confirmed elsewhere, although another official said that "the whole story would not embarrass the President."

This official added that the President's public words of support for his two top aides on April 30 have been given too much emphasis. "What he was doing was sacking his own loyal crowd," the official said. "He gave them as good a send-off as he could."

Other sources said that the three original Federal prosecutors—Earl J. Silbert, Seymour Glanzer and Donald E. Campbell—first learned of the alleged extensive cover-up involvement of Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman from John W. Dean 3d, the former White House counsel who began talking in late March about his role.

Within days, the sources said, the prosecutors—described as being incredulous about Mr. Dean's testimony at first—developed supporting testimony from Jeb Stuart Magruder, the former White House aide who has agreed to plead guilty to cover-up charges.

After more interviews and more corroborative testimony, sources said, the prosecutors informed Mr. Petersen about

these findings, and the April 15 Presidential meeting was scheduled.

The first public description of that session was contained in excerpts from the White House's version of Mr. Nixon's meetings with Mr. Dean that were published Thursday in The New York Times. The summary noted cryptically at one point, "Kleindienst and Petersen focused in on possible involvement of Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Strachan. On April 15 Petersen submitted a memo on Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Strachan."

Gordon C. Strachan, a former aide to Mr. Haldeman, has since been linked to the wiretap logs from the bugged Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex.

On the day after his meeting with Mr. Kleindienst and Mr. Petersen, according to the White House summary, President Nixon asked Mr. Dean to resign and provided him with a draft of a resignation letter. Mr. Dean, who later said that he was not going to be a "scapegoat" in the scandal, refused to resign unless the President also demanded resignations from Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, according to the summary.

Mr. Dean was ousted by Mr. Nixon April 30.

According to depositions taken last month in a civil suit, Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman were asked by the President on March 30 to conduct their own investigation for him within days or Mr. Dean's decision to begin talking to the Federal prosecutors. That phase of the President's inquiry apparently ended after Mr. Nixon received the report from the Justice Department.

It was at that April 15 meeting, too, sources said, that Mr. Kleindienst agreed to excuse himself from further connection with the Watergate investigation because of his close association with many of the suspects. Mr. Kleindienst's subsequent resignation as Attorney General was accepted publicly by President Nixon on April 30.