

**Nixon Denies Any Watergate Knowledge;
Rejects 'Endless Course' of Explaining;
Defends Need for Withholding His Tapes**

REPORT TO NATION

**President Offers His
Reply to Charges
on the Scandal**

By R. W. APPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—

President Nixon asserted once again tonight that he had had no prior knowledge of the Watergate burglary and had been totally unaware of subsequent efforts to cover it up.

But he provided, in a televised speech and an accom-

Text of Nixon white paper will be found on Page 24.

panying 2,500-word statement, almost no additional information on the dozens of questions raised by testimony before the Senate Watergate committee. Instead, he traversed familiar ground and defended at length his refusal to release tape recordings of his personal and telephone conversations.

"I recognize that this statement does not answer many of the questions and contentions raised during the Watergate hearings," the President said in his prepared statement. "It has not been my intention to attempt any such comprehensive and detailed response.

'An Endless Course'

"Neither do I believe I could enter upon an endless course of explaining and rebutting a complex of point-by-point claims and charges . . . and still be able to carry out my duties."

A far more detailed rejoinder had been expected in view of Mr. Nixon's long silence—he last issued a detailed Watergate statement on May 22—and the repeated promises by his spokesmen that he would speak out in full.

But Mr. Nixon said that he intended to let "the legislative and judicial branches resolve" the unanswered questions about Watergate while he attended to his Presidential responsibilities. Those members of his staff who had counseled Mr. Nixon to admit no wrongdoing and to take a tough line appeared to have carried the day.

In the statement, Mr. Nixon asserted that he had not used the Central Intelligence Agency to obstruct the Federal Bureau of Investigation's inquiry into the case; that no member of his staff had ever offered any defendant clemency; that he had never authorized the burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist and that he had relied heavily on the assurances of his since-deceased counsel, John W. Dean 3d, that no White House staff members were involved in the case.

Aided by Two Writers

Mr. Nixon put the final touches to his speech, drafted with the assistance of his two top writers, Raymond K. Price Jr. and Patrick Buchanan, late this afternoon at the White House. The President returned at midday from the last of a series of stays at Camp David, his retreat in the Catoctin Mountains.

As he has done so often in the past, Mr. Nixon chose the seclusion of Camp David in which to do most of the thinking that went into his address tonight—perhaps the most important of a political career

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Continued From Page 1, Col. 8 to hold his first news conference in five months. He last answered reporters' questions on March 15.

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He spoke against a gloomy political backdrop.

In trouble with the electorate not only because of Watergate but also because of economic problems, Mr. Nixon had watched his standing in the public opinion polls plummet since his inauguration for a second term on Jan. 20, only seven months ago.

The latest Gallup survey, published yesterday, showed that his popularity had sunk to 31 per cent. That was the lowest figure in two decades—lower than President Johnson's in the grimmest days of Vietnam protest and equal to that of President Truman at the end of his tenure.

Silence Is Ended

Mr. Nixon's speech ended a period of silence on the Watergate case. Not since May 22 had he made any detailed comment on the matter, although he had indirectly attacked his critics for their tendency to "wallow" in scandal.

More comments on the case may be forthcoming next week. Mr. Nixon will fly to New Orleans on Monday for a major speech to a convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, then continue to his oceanside estate at San Clemente, Calif., for a stay of two weeks.

During that time, according to Presidential aides, he is likely

to hold his first news conference in five months. He last answered reporters' questions on March 15.

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Mr. Dean was the principal witness who linked Mr. Nixon directly to the Watergate case and the cover-up. Some of the other witnesses suggested Presidential involvement, and some denied it; only Mr. Dean offered specific evidence.