

Nixon Sought to Sway Press on Import of Lindsay

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President Nixon personally ordered his White House aides to attempt to persuade newsmen that Mayor Lindsay's reelection in 1969 was based on local issues, and not the Mayor's opposition to the Vietnam war.

"The press, of course, will try to interpret this as a referendum on Vietnam," the President said in a memorandum to his then chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman.

"It is vitally important that this be nailed prior to the election and, of course, be nailed immediately afterwards as strongly as possible," the President continued.

The memo was one of 24 documents released today by the Senate Watergate Committee. The documents had been subpoenaed by the Senate committee from the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

"Set a task force to work on this," President Nixon ordered. "It occurs to me that Buchanan and Safire could be logical members. For example, if some of the conservative columnists like Buckley could hit, and better still if some more in the center were to do so it would be helpful."

The memo concluded by saying: "what I am suggesting primarily is to predict in advance a Lindsay victory based on these major political factors. And then also be ready for the counter-attack when they try to build it up as a Vietnam referendum."

Safire's Statement

William Safire, a former Presidential speech writer who is now a New York Times columnist, said today that "there was no task force."

This was handled informally," said Mr. Safire, who noted that the memo, dated Oct. 29, 1969, was written shortly after the Federal Bureau of Investigation

lifted its tap of his telephone. "I remember discussing this, but I don't know if it was with Haldeman, or at a meeting, or [Patrick] Buchanan and I talked it over," Mr. Safire said.

"Lindsay was the only mayoral candidate with a foreign policy," Mr. Safire said. "In talking with several reporters—and I was always accessible—I'd talk about it."

Victory in '69

Mr. Safire, who is writing a memoir of his Nixon years, added that "if they think this memo is something, wait until my book comes out."