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**Richardson
Felt Nixon
Curbed Probe**

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Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson concluded earlier this month that the White House was trying to get him to limit the Watergate investigation that was conducted until last Saturday by Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, according to well-informed sources.

The sources, familiar with Richardson's thinking during his five-month tenure as the nation's top law enforcement officer, said they were unsure whether Richardson would publicly acknowledge this conclusion at a press conference scheduled for today.

The sources said that Richardson interpreted certain inquiries by the White House about aspects of the Cox investigation at a minimum as signals to go slow.

Specifically, the sources said, the White House asked Richardson about a possible Cox investigation of Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, one of the President's closest personal friends, and a Cox request to obtain records from Rose Mary Woods, the President's personal secretary.

One source went further, saying that Richardson believed he was being told to "call off Cox" from investigating matters touching close to Mr. Nixon, his staff, friends and personal finances.

Richardson's contacts at the White House about the Cox investigation were chief of staff Alexander Haig and special presidential counsel J. Fred Buzhardt. Both have denied requesting a restriction of the Cox investigation.

It is known, however, that Haig did ask Richardson if Cox were investigating \$100,000 given to Rebozo by

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an emissary for billionaire Howard Hughes.

The \$100,000, an alleged campaign contribution that was kept by Rebozo for three years and then returned, has been the subject of an intense Senate Watergate committee probe and a preliminary inquiry by Cox's office.

In addition, it is known that Buzhardt contacted Richardson about a request by the U.S. attorney in New York City concerning an attempt to obtain records from Miss Woods.

"It was clear that the

said, the White House grew increasingly concerned about the Cox investigation as it expanded in the last months to include many aspects of presidential business which the President did not consider part of the special prosecutor's original mandate.

"There seemed to be a lot of unexplained overreaction at the White House about Cox," one source said. "General Haig would call up (Richardson) and ask questions and drop hints . . ."

Another source said: "It was an atmosphere created by repeated contact . . . an atmosphere of do less and

President wanted the investigation to stay away from his personal secretary," one source said. Another source contended that Buzhardt simply was acting as an intermediary to assist the U.S. attorney.

The President was so disturbed over the scope and intensity of the Cox investigation, one source said, that he "threw a temper tantrum" within recent weeks and asked Richardson to oust Cox.

Cox was not fired then because "Richardson talked the President out of it," the source said.

In general, three sources

get the damn investigation finished quickly."

At one point in the week of heavy negotiating before the firing of Cox on Saturday, Richardson, in the words of one source, "thought the White House wanted him out of office as much as Cox."

Another point of pressure on Richardson, the sources said, were private predictions by the presidential lawyers that U. S. District Court Chief Judge John J. Sirica would accept the President's compromise proposal on the White House tape recordings.

The predictions, if accurate, would mean that Cox and Richardson would be the only ones unwilling to go along with the proposed solution. The Senate Watergate committee leadership was willing to accept the authenticated version as a substitute for the tapes.

Under this so-called compromise, the President had agreed to have Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) authenticate the President's version of the contents of the tapes.

The authenticated summary would then be turned over to Cox and the Senate Watergate committee. It was Cox' refusal to accept anything less than the tapes that resulted in his firing on Saturday.

Richardson resigned because he would not carry out the President's orders to remove Cox and abolish the special prosecutor's office.

To compound the pressure on Richardson, the sources said that the President, Haig and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger flooded Richardson with briefings and information on the Mideast crisis.

Richardson was so concerned about the Mideast crisis, one source said, that he discussed the possibility of submitting his resignation confidentially and not announcing it until the Mideast crisis had been settled.

Reliable sources have previously said that the President's maneuvering on the White House tapes was designed primarily to force a confrontation in which the President could fire Cox. As early as last June, Mr. Nixon had determined that the existence of a special prosecutor in the executive branch was unworkable, the sources said.