

# Aides Tell Why Nixon Gave In

Washington

President Nixon, facing what he perceived was a "grave" national crisis of confidence, decided yesterday during "very painful and anguished discussions" with his staff to abandon his strongly held opinion against turning the Watergate tape recordings over to the courts, his assistants said.

He will go on national radio and television at 6 p.m. PDT today to tell his role in what one of his aides called a "firestorm" set off over the weekend by his attempts to settle the tapes controversy by appointing Senator John C. Stennis, (Dem-Miss.) to decide what material from the tapes should go to the courts.

The President's action led to the dismissal of special prosecutor Archibald Cox, the abolishment of Cox's office and the resignations of Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and his deputy, William D. Ruckelshaus.

## EXPLAIN

Less than three hours after Mr. Nixon's lawyers announced in court that he had abandoned his plan and would comply in full with the court order, Alexander M. Haig Jr., the President's chief of staff, and his special counsel, Charles Alan Wright, held a news conference to explain the White House position.

When the President flew to his retreat at Camp David late Monday, they said, he was committed to riding out the storm of protests that his actions had precipitated and to trying to persuade the courts to accept his plan to make information from

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AP Wirephoto  
ALEXANDER HAIG  
'Grave circumstances'

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the tapes available through Stennis.

But it was clear, according to Haig, that there had been a great deal of "misunderstanding and misinformation" regarding the President's position, and the President returned to his office yesterday morning with much of the country embroiled in controversy.

"The President concluded after very painful and anguished discussions that the circumstances were sufficiently grave," said Haig "that he should abandon his very strongly held and long held right to protect the prerogative of his office not only for himself but for future presidents."

About noon, he said, Mr. Nixon told Wright to prepare to turn over the tapes to U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica. At 2 p.m. Wright stunned Sirica's courtroom with his announcement that the tapes would be furnished as ordered.

It was clear that no one in the White House anticipated that the events of last Friday and Saturday would arouse such a storm of protest and demands from a number of sources that the President be impeached.

"We all miscalculated Friday night," said Wright. "My own mood was one of euphoria" that the President had made such an "extraordinarily generous proposal."

As to the shakeup in the Justice Department, Haig said, "it was not pre-planned, not desired and probably not too well visualized on Friday morning by all of the participants."

Haig said the President's sudden turnabout on the

tapes did not stem solely from talk of impeachment but from the "whole milieu of national concern" over the events of the last few days.

Apparently speaking for the President as well as for himself, Haig said in response to questions that he did not believe Congress would have gone through with impeachment had Mr. Nixon not given in. The President simply felt, he said, that the nation could not be torn at this time by such disunity as the events of the weekend created.

Had the President considered resigning?

"Not to my knowledge and I prayerfully hope not," Haig said.

Haig denied reports that Mr. Nixon had decided even before the events of last week to dismiss Cox because his office was making its investigation much broader in scope than the President considered proper and there was fear Cox was "out to get" the President.

"But there were many of us concerned about the political alignment of the Cox staff," he said, adding that it was "roaming outside its charter."

The administration has no intention, however, of reinstating the office or any of the three officials who were dismissed or resigned this week.

It was an unusual appearance for Haig, a former lieutenant general in the Army who had not previously held a news conference. Asked if he had ordered the FBI to seal off Cox's offices after the public dismissal Saturday night, Haig said:

"Guilty! I did order the FBI to do that. We had reports that members of the staff were leaving rapidly with huge bundles under their arms." He said he acted to preserve the files of the office.

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