

NYTimes NOV 6 1973
**Fewer Aides See Nixon
As Haig's Role Increases**

By JOHN HERBERS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5—A few days ago, former Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., his eyes red from lack of sleep and his face drawn with fatigue, observed that he had never known military combat to be as arduous as being President Nixon's right-hand man in recent weeks.

"It is not only the Watergate matters," he told a visitor to his office in a conversation that was interrupted four times by Presidential summonses, "The Middle East crisis has taken even more of my time."

As the President's troubles have worsened, Mr. Nixon's tendency to rely for advice and help on a small circle of men seems to have increased, and a major part of the burden has fallen to the man who has been

the President's chief of staff since May 4.

Day after day, according to White House announcements, Mr. Nixon spends his time chiefly with Mr. Haig; Ronald L. Ziegler, his press secretary, and Secretary of State Kissinger.

The narrowness of Mr. Nixon's day-to-day contacts has become a matter of growing concern to a number of Republican leaders in Congress and to some White House aides who feel they have little influence as the President's public support has declined and demands for his resignation have increased.

There has been a current of unrest among some White House staff members, who say they fear that in many ways Mr. Nixon is right back where he was in April, before the dismissal of H. R. Haldeman, his then chief of staff, and John D. Ehrlichman, his domestic affairs adviser, who were widely accused of isolating the President.

Mr. Haig has taken a different tack, urging a more open Administration and decentrali-

Continued on Page 22, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

zation of authority. But Mr. Nixon, these staff members say privately, has persisted in his habit of restricting his contacts.

One example of how this has damaged the President was cited. According to testimony in United States District court here, President Nixon knew more than one month ago that two of the nine Watergate tapes sought by the court could not be found, but he apparently did not inform his chief lawyer, who was defending his position in court.

Questioning of Wright

Prof. Charles Alan Wright, in explaining at a news conference on Oct. 23 why Mr. Nixon had decided to turn over the tapes, made a statement that turned out to be untrue. Following is a portion of the exchange:

Q. What you have said here about the tapes supporting the President is based upon what the President told you, and not upon you hearing the tapes?

A. Exactly so. I have the old-fashioned American habit of believing Presidents of the United States.

Q. Will you produce the documents called for in the subpoena?

A. Everything called for in the subpoena will be produced.

One week later, other White House lawyers went into court and said two tapes called for in the subpoena would not be produced because they never existed.

Stephen B. Bull, a special assistant to the President, testified last Friday that President Nixon told him on Sept. 29 that the two recorded conversations were missing.

Changes in Staff

Meantime, as the controversy over the tapes and other issues have been the center of attention, a number of changes have taken place in the White House staff.

A number of high officials who became disillusioned with their jobs and planned to leave were persuaded by colleagues and higher authorities to stay on the ground of loyalty. To leave at this time, they were told, would make it appear that the Administration was caving in.

Some middle-level officials are leaving, however. One young man, who makes \$36,000 a year and who joined the White House staff in 1971, has

mailed out a resumé in search of a new job.

"Morale at the White House plummeted," he said, after President Nixon discharged Archibald Cox as special Wat-

ergate prosecutor and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson resigned. He said a number of colleagues had decided to leave.

He no longer believes in the President, he said, and has decided the "moral stature" of the White House is gone. He thinks the President is suffering from strain.

In terms of new initiatives on policy matters, the young man said the Presidency was "at a standstill." He added, however, that the Federal bureaucracy, which is not dependent on Presidential inspiration, continued to function without much change.

The Domestic Council, which was set up with considerable fanfare by President Nixon and Mr. Ehrlichman in the first Nixon term, has diminished greatly in influence since Mr. Ehrlichman left. It comes under the authority of Melvin R. Laird, who succeeded Mr. Ehrlichman. However, Mr. Laird has never been close to the President and plans to leave in a few months.

Much of the power that Mr. Ehrlichman and his staff wielded on domestic matters—Mr. Ehrlichman once told a visitor, "I am the domestic President"—has reverted to the Office of Management and Budget, headed by Roy L. Ash

and his deputy, Frederic V. Malek.

They have been building a the agency designed to effect President Nixon's policies across the Government, and this has been going on quietly, not greatly affected by the storms at the center of the White House.

The President's time in recent weeks has been dominated by Watergate and related matters and by foreign policy, according to officials familiar with his routine.

'Pulling out of This'

There has been general acknowledgment on the staff that the moves he has been made in recent weeks in regard to the tapes were mistakes and that the President has to make some new moves to repair his credibility. Some staff members have said privately that they believe the President should resign, but chiefly the talk centers on ways of "pulling out of this."

The President's reliance on Mr. Haig and Mr. Ziegler continued through this weekend, according to the President's spokesmen. Mr. Nixon, for example, did not even see his lawyers, J. Fred Buzhardt Jr. and Leonard Garment, on the crucial question of the tapes. Instead, they talked to Mr. Haig, who in turn was to talk to the President.