

'Security Lobby' in 3 Watergate Cases

Washington

The White House has attempted to discourage the possible indictment of three former top presidential aides in Watergate related cases, in the past several months, on the grounds that prosecution would jeopardize national security, according to informed sources.

Certain federal indictments of former presidential aides John D. Ehrlichman, Charles W. Colson and Egil (Bud) Krogh Jr, would threaten national security, the sources said, because the three men might disclose other covert national security operations as part of their defense.

White House special counsel J Fred Buzhardt lobbied heavily in the summer and early fall with former Attorney General Elliott L. Richardson and former special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox, arguing that indictments of Ehrlichman,

Colson and Krogh could not be brought.

"The president's position is that certain cases could not be brought and if they were, the prosecutors would have to be dropped," one source said.

All the sources agreed that the disclosures would be embarrassing, and that the activities in question include previously undisclosed domestic wiretapping and other physical surveillance.

There was strong disagreement among the sources as to whether the public disclosure of these activities, of which Ehrlichman, Colson and Krogh have some knowledge, would actually jeopardize national security or whether disclosure would simply constitute another embarrassment to the Nixon administration.

Both Richardson and Cox were less than responsive to Buzhardt's lobbying efforts, the sources said, and both wanted a complete investigation of all Watergate re-

lated cases before reaching a decision on whether to bring indictments.

SHOWDOWN

The sources said Richardson's and Cox's unwillingness to take White House direction on these indictments helped precipitate the showdown that led to the resignation of Richardson and the firing of Cox on October 20.

As part of his lobbying effort, Buzhardt made partial disclosure of the activities in question to the Justice Department to buttress his argument that national security interests were more important than bringing prosecution against Ehrlichman, Colson and Krogh in certain cases.

That, however, did not include any attempt to discourage indictments in the Watergate bugging operation or the coverup, the sources said. The discouragement, according to the sources, had to do with re-

lated matters such as — though not necessarily including — the wiretaps on the telephones of syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft and the president's brother, F. Donald Nixon.

ORDERS

President Nixon has previously invoked national security to limit various facets of Watergate related investigations. Within six days of the June, 1972 Watergate break-in, the President has said, he ordered that the FBI investigation be restricted to avoid exposing "either an unrecalled covert activity of the CIA or the activities of the White House investigations unit" — the plumbers. The investigation was restricted for about two weeks.

In April of this year, the President attempted to prevent the Justice Department from providing information on the burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist to the Los Angeles court where Ellsberg was on trial. This was done on the grounds that the information might adversely affect national security.

Richard Kleindienst, who was then attorney general, balked at the President's decision and insisted that the information be supplied. It was forwarded to the judge in the case after a delay of about ten days. The Ellsberg case was subsequently dismissed.

Ehrlichman is a target of the federal investigation here into the Watergate coverup and the Ellsberg burglary. He already has been indicted by a separate California grand jury for his alleged role in the Ellsberg case. Colson and Krogh also are targets of the federal probe into the Ellsberg matter.

Krogh has been indicted by the California grand jury and was the only person named in a separate grand jury indictment here on charges of making false statements.

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