

# Nixon in 8th Phase of Counterattack

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The counterattack President Nixon is now vigorously conducting is at least the eighth major report he has made this year to put the Watergate scandals behind him.

The use of a counteroffensive when his position or power is threatened is a technique that Mr. Nixon has used consistently, often with the desired results, in his long political career. But this year he has failed seven times, with his popularity in the public opinion polls and in political institutions declining after each attempt.

The current counterattack, described by some White House officials as one last, sustained effort to demonstrate the President's innocence, is different from the previous ones in that it includes more disclosure of White House documents and more appearances before the public and elected officials. And it promises to last longer.

## Attacks Called Unfair

The basic approach, however, is the same—to persuade people through the hard sell that Mr. Nixon is being unfairly attacked and that this attack must let up if he is to go about governing the country in the way he was elected to do a year ago.

Mr. Nixon's counterattacks began in April, after a series of disclosures that showed high White House officials were involved in covering up the Watergate burglary and other offenses. Following are the major strategies as they occurred over the year:

Phase 1, the President moves against the Watergate crimes—on April 17, Mr. Nixon broke a long silence in the case by appearing in the White House press room, declaring that he had learned of "major developments" in the case and had ordered a thorough investigation, and that "real progress has been made in finding the truth." Over the next few days Mr. Nixon was depicted by his spokesmen as moving vigorously to see that judicial processes took place.

Phase 2, clean out the Government, accept the responsibility but not the blame—

on April 30, Mr. Nixon accepted the resignation of his two top assistants, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, and Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst; said responsibility for Watergate belonged in his office and "I accept it" but proclaimed his own innocence and said that he hoped the 1,361 days remaining in his term would be "the best days in America's history."

Over the next three weeks, he continued the government shake-up, appointed John B. Connally as his special adviser and attempted to show in a number of ways that a new order had been established.

Phase 3, attribute much of the case to the need to protect national security—in a long statement issued on May 22, Mr. Nixon said that a series of covert operations conducted by the White House with approval had been in the interest of national security.

## Lack of Favorable Response

Two days later, Mr. Nixon sought to win sympathy on the national security issue in a speech to former prisoners of war, saying, among other things, "It is time in this country to quit making national heroes of those who steal secrets and publish them in the newspapers." This phase was dropped in a few days after it failed to draw much favorable response.

Phase 4, open government and public appearances—On June 6, Mr. Nixon appointed Melvin R. Laird, the former Congressman and Secretary of Defense, as his chief domestic adviser, partly to show that he was opening the White House more to Congress and to Cabinet members. On June 8, in an address at the University of Orlando, in Florida, Mr. Nixon began a series of public addresses to show he still had public support and to proclaim the accomplishments of his Administration.

Phase 5, ignore Watergate and demonstrate a President preoccupied with the Government back to the White House on July 20, Mr. Nixon said, "Let others wallow in Watergate, we are going to do our job."

He stuck to this through his Aug. 15 television report to the nation, following the Senate Watergate hearings, in which he said he would not "enter into an endless course of explaining and rebutting a complex of point-by-point claims and charges arising out of that conflicting testimony." He could not do so, he said, "and still be able to carry out my duties as President." The place for Watergate, he said, was in the courts.

Phase 6, answer the charges while depicting the news media as unfairly attacking him—On Aug. 22, in San Clemente, Calif., Mr. Nixon held his first news conference in five months and for 45 minutes answered questions, mostly on Watergate. He appealed to the American people as a President harassed and abused by the news media. A few days later, he released a report he had commissioned on the acquisition of his homes in San Clemente and Key Biscayne, Fla.

## Messages to Congress

Phase 7, a new effort to show a President "doing something"—in a Sept. 5 new conference and on a later radio address, Mr. Nixon said he would send to Congress a new State of the Union Message to revive interest in his legislative program. This message was followed by a message on housing policy and a number of other activities.

Phase 8, turn over tape recordings and other records to the courts and, to some extent, the public, meet members of Congress and submit to questioning and make public addresses—This is the current phase. This strategy was devised when the President suffered a series of reverses after the ouster of the special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, and the White House declaration that two of the nine Watergate tapes Mr. Cox had sought never existed.

The President's spokesmen said that the current effort would continue over a period of weeks and that it had been planned in the belief that there would be no further surprise disclosures to upset it.