

Advice to Nixon

Richardson Tells Of Haig Effort In Cox Affair

Washington

Elliot L. Richardson says that Alexander M. Haig Jr., President Nixon's chief of staff, told him he had unsuccessfully tried to dissuade the President from ordering Archibald Cox on October 19 to stop all court

actions to obtain White House tape recordings and related documents.

The former attorney general said in an interview, "Haig said that he had tried, but that the President wouldn't yield on that."

Haig, in an interview, made it clear that he was not denying the Richardson account but declined to discuss the matter.

Cox's refusal to comply with the President's order led to his dismissal on October 20 as the special Watergate prosecutor.

The order led as well to Richardson's resignation as attorney general and to the dismissal of William D. Ruckelshaus as deputy attorney general.

Richardson recounted Haig's statement during an interview this week at his home in McLean, Va.

Richardson said that Haig made his comment on Friday afternoon, October 19.

It was the end of a week of negotiations involving the White House, Cox and Richardson regarding the manner in which the President should respond to Cox's subpoena — which had just been upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals — for tape recordings of nine Watergate-related conversations.

Much of the discussion had centered on the proposal under which Senator John C. Stennis (Dem.-Miss.), would prepare an "authenticated" summary of the contents of

the tapes, and the summary would be presented to the courts rather than the tapes themselves.

The question of just what was said in the negotiations that week regarding Cox's future access to other presidential papers and tapes has been, from a different angle, a matter of some dispute lately.

Richardson testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that he opposed White House efforts to forbid Cox to go to court to seek additional presidential documents.

In the interview, the former attorney general said that he made clear to the White House on October 15, and especially on October 17, that he would try to persuade Cox to accept the Stennis summary in place of the tapes of the nine specific conversations, but that he would not try to persuade the prosecutor to agree that access to other material should be foreclosed as well.

He said that on October 19 he became aware of the White House desire to link the foreclosure to the Stennis summary proposal, and that he had objected.

But not until that evening, he said, that Haig told him Cox was to be "instructed" not to try to obtain other presidential material.

President Nixon, however, has been variously quoted by congressmen as having told them that Richardson "lied" or misled the Senate in testifying about his role in the negotiations. The White House has denied the use of word "lie." It has said, however, that the President referred to "several versions of the events" leading to Cox's dismissal.

Haig said last night that "there is nothing in dispute" except for the meeting at the White House on the morning of October 19 among Richardson, Haig and other White House aides, in which the proposal to link the Stennis plan to the foreclosure plan was discussed.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote next week on whether to call Haig to testify about the apparent conflict.

New York Times