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**RICHARDSON SAYS
HAIG BACKED COX**

**Asserts Chief of Staff Tried
to Persuade Nixon Not to
Order Halt to Tape Suit**

By LESLEY OELSNER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22—El-
liot L. Richardson says that
Alexander M. Haig Jr., Presi-
dent Nixon's chief of staff, told
him he had unsuccessfully tried
to dissuade the President from
ordering Archibald Cox on Oct.
19 to stop all court actions to
obtain White House tape re-
cordings 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."

Mr. Haig, in an interview last
night, made it clear that he was
not denying the Richardson ac-
count but declined to discuss
the matter. Sitting before the
fireplace in his office in the
West Wing in the White House,
he said, "I don't discuss what
discussions I had with the
President."

Mr. Cox's refusal to comply
with the President's order led
to his dismissal on Oct. 20 as
the special Watergate prosecu-
tor.

The order led as well to Mr.
Richardson's resignation as At-
torney General and to the dis-
missal of William D. Ruckelshaus
as Deputy Attorney General. In
the wake of Mr. Cox's refusal
to comply, the President directed
first Mr. Richardson and then
Mr. Ruckelshaus to

Continued on Page 57, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

dismiss the prosecutor, and
each in turn chose to leave
office rather to obey.

Mr. Richardson recounted Mr.
Haig's statement in an inter-
view this week at his home in
McLean, Va.

Mr. Richardson said that Mr.
Haig made his comment on Fri-
day afternoon Oct. 19

It was the end of a week of
negotiations involving the
White House, Mr. Cox and Mr.
Richardson, regarding the man-
ner in which the President
should respond to Mr. Cox's
Subpoena—which had just been
upheld by the United States
Court of Appeals—for tape re-
cordings of nine Watergate-re-
lated conversations.

Much of the discussions had

centered on the proposal under
which Senator John C. Stennis,
Democrat of Mississippi, 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.

Mr. Richardson said that he
had become increasingly aware
that the White House wanted
to link the Stennis proposal to
a limitation on Mr. Cox's ability
to go to court in pursuit of
any other presidential tapes or
documents.

So, he said, he tried to de-
vise some way to "handle the
relationship between the basic
Stennis proposal and the White
House view that Mr. Cox
should be foreclosed from pur-
suing other documents.

A Rejected Thought

He thought first of writing
into the proposal some refer-
ence to its status as a "prece-
dent," he recalled, but dis-
missed that as unworkable.

"So then I had the thought,"
he said, speaking with delibera-
tion "that the way to do it
was to try to persuade the
President to drop any mention
of other situations and him-
self, in effect, to put forward
the Stennis proposal alone."

"So I called Haig to urge
that, and later Buzhardt [J. Fred
Buzhardt Jr., a White House
lawyer] and talked to Haig a
second time," Mr. Richardson
said. "Haig said that he had
tried but that the President
couldn't yield on that."

That evening, the President
announced both the Stennis
proposal and his order to Mr.
Cox, directing the prosecutor to
refrain from all future court ac-
tions aimed at obtaining Presi-
dential papers.

The Stennis plan was subse-
quently dropped as a result of
public and political criticism.

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

Mr. Richardson testified be-
fore the Senate Judiciary Com-
mittee that he opposed the
White House efforts to forbid
Mr. Cox to go to court to seek
Presidential documents beyond
and in addition to the tapes of
the nine disputed conversations.

Support for Summary

In the interview, the former
Attorney General said that he
made clear to the White House,
on Oct. 15, and especially on
Oct. 17, that he would try to
persuade Mr. 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 Oct. 19 he
became aware of the White
House desire to link the fore-
closure to the Stennis summary
proposal, and that he had ob-
jected.

But not until that evening,

he said, when Mr. Haig called
him at 7 o'clock to read him a
letter the President was send-
ing to Mr. Richardson, did he

realize that Mr. Cox was to be
"instructed" not to try to ob-
tain other presidential material.

President Nixon, however,
has been variously quoted by
Congressmen as having told
them that Mr. Richardson "lied"
or mislead the Senate in testifi-
ng about his role in the nego-
tiations. 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 Mr. Cox's dismissal.

Mr. Haig said last night that
"there is nothing in dispute"
except for the meeting at the
White House on the morning
of Oct. 19 among Mr. Richard-
son, Mr. Haig and other White
House aides, in which the pro-
posal to link the Stennis plan
to the foreclosure plan was
discussed.

As Mr. Haig explained it, his
"perceptions" of the meeting
were different from Mr. Rich-
ardson's. Mr. Richardson ac-
cording to Mr. Haig, believed
that the White House announce-
ment would likely include
"some combination" of the
Stennis and foreclosure plans,
while Mr. Haig believed that it
was clear that the discussion
had involved the plan to "in-
struct" Mr. Cox to refrain from
further litigation.

The Senate Judiciary Com-
mittee is expected to vote next
week on whether to call Mr.
Haig to testify about the ap-
parent conflict.

More Difficulty Seen

Mr. Cox's objections to the
foreclosure arrangement were
that his job of prosecuting
Watergate cases would be made
infinitely more difficult and,
in some cases, perhaps impos-
sible without access to Watergate-
related presidential papers.

Mr. Richardson has said con-
sistently in his public state-
ments that he could not impose
such a limitation on the special
prosecutor's independence be-
cause he had promised the
Senate, during his own confir-
mation hearings, that the
prosecutor would be allowed
independence.

The President has consist-
ently argued that any forced
disclosure of Presidential papers
or conversations would inhibit
White House personnel in their
work and discussions and would
thus hinder the functioning of
the executive branch.

Others have suggested,
though, that the President may
have been using the Watergate
tapes case almost as a decoy,
that by denying access to the
tapes he could also deny access
to other documents that might
be more incriminating.

The President has also been
reported to have said, at vari-
ous times, that he would prefer
having Mr. Cox out of office.

According to Mr. Richard-



son's chronology of the week
that culminated in Mr. Cox's
dismissal, the negotiations be-
gan with the White House
suggesting that Mr. Cox be
dismissed.

On Monday morning, three
days after the appeals court
ruled that Mr. Nixon must
comply with the subpoena, "I
was called over the White
House," Mr. Richardson said.

In a meeting with Mr. Haig
and Mr. Buzhardt, he said he
was told the following: "The
President would prepare his
own edited version of the
tapes, this would be offered to
the court, and Cox would be
fired."

"I said no, I thought it was
a terrible idea and if that hap-
pened, I would resign," Mr.
Richardson said.

Later that day, he went on,
Mr. Haig broached the Stennis
proposal. According to Mr.
Richardson, he said that he
would try to persuade Mr. Cox
to accept the summary as a
substitute for the tapes—mak-
ing clear, he said, that he
would not try to persuade Mr.
Cox to give up the chance for

access to any other Presidential
papers later.

As has been made clear
through his statements and his
writings, Mr. Cox did not find
the Stennis idea acceptable.

Thursday night, when Mr.
Richardson went to the White
House once more, there was,
he said, "long discussion."

"The plan that was put to
me Thursday evening," he said,
"was that if Cox definitively,
flatly rejected the Stennis pro-
posal, that he would be fired."

Mr. Richardson said that he
went home that night and
wrote out a summary of "rea-
sons why I must resign," and
that on Friday morning, he
asked for, and was told he
could have, an appointment
with the President. He planned
to tell Mr. Nixon, whom he had
not seen or talked to all week,
that he would resign, he said.