

White House Silent on Haldeman Files

By JOHN HERBERS

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The White House would not say today who owns the files that H. R. Haldeman left behind but apparently continued to control after he resigned as President Nixon's chief of staff last April 30.

Lawrence M. Higby, who served as Mr. Haldeman's deputy and who is still on the White House payroll, testified in United States District Court yesterday that Mr. Haldeman in recent days had directed him by telephone on which documents to remove and did not disclose until two weeks ago the combination to the lock that secured the files.

Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, was asked today who owns the files and what influence Mr. Haldeman continues to exercise in the White House.

Telephoned 'Very Rarely'

Mr. Warren declined to discuss the files, saying that was a matter before the courts, but he said that except for Mr. Higby, "there is no one in the White House whom Mr. Haldeman is giving instructions to."

For weeks, there have been indications that Mr. Haldeman has maintained contacts with the White House. He has reportedly talked on a number of occasions with the President and members of the staff by telephone.

Mr. Warren sought today to minimize contacts that have

continued between Mr. Haldeman and the President, saying they had spoken by telephone "very rarely."

He was also asked about Ronald L. Ziegler, the President's press secretary, who had taken orders from Mr. Haldeman when he was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff.

"I don't think Ron has talked to him more than four or five times," Mr. Warren replied.

There have been no suggestions that Mr. Haldeman has been attempting to run the Government, rather that he and the President might be coordinating their defenses in the Watergate case. Both men have publicly supported each other in the investigation.

F.B.I. Agents on Duty

For a few weeks after he left the White House, Mr. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the President's former domestic adviser, who also resigned on April 30, were given access to their files and offices in which to work on their defense. For a time, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had agents stationed in the White House to make sure that files were not removed.

Alexander M. Haig Jr., who succeeded Mr. Haldeman as chief of staff, testified in Federal Court today that he was "very disturbed" last July when he learned that Mr. Haldeman had taken tape recordings from the White House and listened to them.

Mr. Haig also testified that

when Mr. Haldeman left the White House he told him that he had ordered a new lock combination put on his files. Mr. Haig said he asked him to leave the combination with the President but that he apparently had not done so. Mr. Haldeman supplied the combination only a few days ago after Mr. Haig had called him personally and asked for it, according to Mr. Higby.

Position Questioned

Mr. Higby's continuance at the White House after Mr. Haldeman's departure has raised a number of questions. Shortly after Mr. Haig arrived he had the young executive moved out of the White House to the nearby Executive Office Building. While Mr. Higby has continued on the White House payroll and has a White House telephone number, he has been serving as an assistant to Frederick V. Malek, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, who also had served on the Presidential staff under Mr. Haldeman.

Mr. Malek has said that Mr. Higby is conducting several special projects. Mr. Higby has said that, in addition to the projects, he is serving as a liaison officer between O.M.B., a Presidential agency, and the White House staff. Roy L. Ash, director of the budget agency, is a Presidential assistant who has an office in the White House.