

Nixon Locked Up Staff

The entire staff of the White House was locked up inside the presidential mansion for 23 minutes Thursday night while President Nixon walked the grounds before making his resignation speech on nationwide television. (8 AUG)

The order to bolt the doors from the outside apparently came from the Secret Service at about 6:20 p.m., which is approximately the time that White House police were stationed outside each of the locked doors. Nobody was allowed out and nobody was allowed in to the White House grounds for the next 23 minutes.

Reporters thought they were the only ones locked in, an impression the White House did nothing to change. The White House press office put the blame for the lock-in on the Secret Service. The Press Office said the Secret Service misunderstood President Nixon's wishes at the time.

In fact, the order to lock all the White House doors came to the Secret Service from President Nixon himself, who apparently wished to walk the grounds totally undisturbed.

The White House staff of 500 was down to less than half at that point, meaning that perhaps 200 people were locked inside not knowing why. The Secret Service denied issuing the order on its own.

"Ask Gen. Haig," was the response of one Secret Service official to a query about the lock-in. "That's where the order came from."