

Haig's Return to Army Expected in November

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An announcement that Alexander M. Haig Jr. will leave his civilian White House chief of staff post and be recalled to active duty as the top U.S. commander in Europe is imminent, according to administration sources.

Haig will leave soon, take an extended vacation with his family, and then assume the European post, the White House is expected to confirm next week, perhaps as early as Monday.

Haig is also expected to become supreme allied commander in Europe, the top NATO job, which normally goes along with the top U.S. military command assignment.

Haig would replace Army Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, who holds the two positions.

Acting press secretary John W. Hushen said yesterday the President would hold a news conference soon and give a fuller explanation of his decision to grant a pardon to former President Nixon. He may announce the Haig transfer at the same time, and also name a new press secretary. A successor to Haig has not been chosen.

Top-level NATO meetings



ALEXANDER M. HAIG JR.
... NATO support seen

are scheduled in Rome and Brussels in mid-November, and sources expect that it will be at those meetings that Goodpaster, now 59, will deliver his final report to NATO and step down in favor of Haig.

The anticipated recall to active duty of Haig was made known earlier this month, and it has touched off some opposition in Congress and among some officials in Holland.

In general, however, administration officials believe there is sufficient support for Haig in Congress and relatively strong support for him within NATO. No opposition had been noted from West Germany or England, the two most powerful NATO allies.

Haig retired as a four-star general and Army vice chief of staff last summer to take the White House job at former President Nixon's request.

The President can recall him to active duty and also assign him the U.S. commander's job in Europe. Since the U.S. commander also is the link with the U.S. nuclear forces, the job has automatically become a dual role as top NATO commander.

Haig will also probably have to go through confirmation hearings in Congress. The European post does not require confirmation, and Haig already went through congressional hearings when he got his fourth star last year. Normally, top commanders do have such hearings, but it is usually because they are getting their fourth star at the same time.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) has publicly stated that Haig's recall would have a serious impact on the Army, since it would signal up-and-coming officers that the best way to get ahead is to take political and staff jobs rather than advancing through traditional Army assignments.

Others argue that Haig was asked to serve in the White House by the President and that such a request is hard to turn down.

Within the Army's top echelons, there was strong opposition to a possible Haig return as vice chief or chief of staff. But there is little Army opposition evidenced to his return in the European assignment.

All 14 NATO governments are understood to have given their tacit approval to the Haig assignment.

A report that former Gov. William W. Scranton of Pennsylvania, who has headed Mr. Ford's transition staff and has acted as a talent scout for the President, would succeed Haig was emphatically denied.

"There is no truth to it all," Scranton said in a telephone interview when asked if he would succeed Haig.

The former governor spent some time in Washington this week and conferred with the President, but he returned to his Pennsylvania home yesterday. He said he had completed the transition work the President asked him to do.

The President conferred with a variety of officials yesterday and told nearly 30 black Republican leaders that they "have a friend in the White House."

The meeting was a follow-up

to one he held last month with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Presidential aide Stanley Scott, who relayed the President's comment and arranged the Cabinet Room session said that Mr. Ford spent 51 minutes with the group to discuss ways to broaden black participation in the Republican Party.

Mary Louise Smith, chairman-designate of the Republican National Committee, attended the meeting. Mayor Robert Blackwell of Highland Park, Mich., said there was considerable discussion of the effect on inflation, unemployment and other economic problems on the poor and blacks generally.

Hushen, who has been acting press secretary since J. Peter Horst left, said the President had asked Dr. William Lukash, his personal physician, to keep the President informed regarding the health of former President Nixon.

Responding to questions as to whether the health factor was a major reason for the pardon of Mr. Nixon, Hushen said that "the President is of course concerned about the former President's health, but the health of the nation is more important than the health of any one man, and that is his paramount concern."

The President also conferred with Graham Martin, ambassador to South Vietnam. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger took part in the meeting, at which they discussed military and economic aid to South Vietnamese.