

Advisers' Plea to Ford

Washington

Clay T. Whitehead, a member of President Ford's transition team, said yesterday the group has recommended a cutback in military influence at the White House.

"We were concerned about the heavy military influence at the White House" during the waning days of Richard M. Nixon's administration, Whitehead said in a televised interview.

Citing the strong role of General Alexander M. Haig as White House chief of staff, Whitehead noted that "there have been a number of military officers doing substantive staff jobs in the White House."

"We felt that that was for the large part inappropriate and recommended that there be a curtailing or cutback in that area," Whitehead said.

Haig's resignation is expected to be announced this week. He is under consideration to be commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Europe.



AP Wirephoto

CLAY T. WHITEHEAD
He said the transition team was 'concerned'

Whitehead, who is resigning as director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, said Haig "was too important operationally to the President"

to be replaced as soon as Mr. Ford took over.

It would be exaggerating, Whitehead noted, to say that Haig became "surrogate President" while Mr. Nixon was increasingly preoccupied with Watergate and impeachment.

But Whitehead added that Haig "certainly had much more power concentrated in any one man, short of the President, than we've ever seen before, and far more than would be healthy in normal circumstances."

Appearing on the CBS program "Face the Nation," Whitehead said the transition team made no recommendations concerning a possible pardon of Mr. Nixon, because "it was something we didn't feel that the President needed urgent advice on."

Whitehead said he believes Mr. Ford should have waited until Mr. Nixon was indicted before pardoning the ex-president. "My personal judgment is that the timing of it was a mistake," he said.

Associated Press