

Haig Faces Hill Challenge

By Michael Getler

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Ford's recall to active military duty of Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. faces a legal challenge in Congress, where some senators want the right to question the appointment in congressional hearings.

Mr. Ford announced Monday that Haig would leave his White House post as civilian chief of staff and return to active duty in the dual role of supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and U.S. military forces in Europe.

The White House and the Pentagon both have said that Haig's assignment to the key military post does not require confirmation by the Senate. However, the legal basis for this view is being challenged by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), reportedly with support from at least three other senators.

Both Proxmire and the Pentagon cite various sections of the U.S. legal code to support their views in the continuing controversy over the Haig appointment.

A few weeks ago, when it was first made known that Haig probably would be recalled to duty for the European command, Proxmire voiced strong objections, claiming that such a move would blur the traditional line separating military men from politics.

The senator also said he thought the recall to the important European command would have a serious impact on the Army since, in his view, it would suggest to young officers that the path to the top was through political and staff jobs rather than through traditional Army assignments.

Now that the President has acted, however, Proxmire has shifted his efforts and has written chairman Jonn C. Stennis (D-Miss.) of the Senate Armed Services Committee asking that the committee "exert its jurisdiction" and hold hearings on the Haig nomination to clear up the political and philosophical issues that continue to surround the four-star general.

Proxmire is also reported to have gathered support in this request from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) and Dick Clark (D-Iowa). Hughes is an Armed Services Committee member, and if he demands hearings it could force the issue.

Stennis, however, at least initially, did not appear eager to have such hearings. In a short statement issued through his

office in Mississippi yesterday after the Proxmire request, Stennis said: "I think Gen. Haig will do a good job as U.S. commander in Europe . . . and I'm pleased that he is back in military service."

In Washington, that statement was viewed as making chances appear slim that there

would be hearings, unless pressure built for them.

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.), in a telephone interview, said he would not support or join in any call for such hearings, believing the appointment to be a presidential prerogative. He said, however, that he would

not oppose hearings if that was a widely held position.

Proxmire cites Section 3064 of Title 10, U.S. Code, to the effect that when the President designates general officers to "positions of importance and responsibility" such appointments must have the "advice and consent" of the Senate.