

Haig Officially Returned to Active Army Duty

By Michael Getler
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Former White House chief of staff Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. was officially returned to active duty with the U. S. Army yesterday. The four-star general apparently will assume his new duties as the top U. S. and NATO commander in Europe next month without congressional hear-

ings on the controversial appointment.

When the plans to recall Haig to active duty were first officially revealed by the White House early in September, some congressmen, including at least one on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for hearings on the Haig appointment. These lawmakers claimed

that because of Haig's unique political role as a civilian in the Nixon White House, and questions about his involvement in several sensitive issues, congressional committees should have a chance to air these issues with him before he takes on the top military job in Europe.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), who is not a committee member, met privately late last month to discuss whether to hold hearings on the Haig appointment. Sources say, however, that no conclusions were reached then and no hearings are scheduled. Committee Chairman Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) is known not to favor such a session.

With Haig scheduled to leave the United States late this month to take over as commander of U. S. forces in Europe on Nov. 1, and with Congress expected to start its election recess this week, congressional observers say there is virtually no chance that hearings will be held.

The Pentagon has claimed that the European job is not one that requires Senate confirmation, and cites various sections of the U. S. Code to support its view. Proxmire has cited other sections to support his view, but has also argued that, legal questions aside, the European appointment is important enough, and Haig's career has been unusual enough, to warrant at least airing the issues.

There also has been some uneasiness over the appointment reported from Europe, though with the exception of the Netherlands, the other 13 NATO allies voiced no official opposition to Haig.

On Dec. 15, Haig is to take on the dual role as supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe, the traditional "second hat" worn by the officer who also commands the U.S. forces there.

Haig retired from the Army in August, 1973, to move to the White House as civilian chief of staff. While his close political associations have caused concern within the Army, there is also a recognition by many senior officers that when the President asks one of them to do something, such a request is hard to turn down.

Haig, the Defense Department said yesterday, will begin briefings in the Pentagon next week in preparation for his new assignment.