

NYTimes NOV 2 1974

# Haig Takes Over New Post; Predecessor Is Absent

Special to The New York Times

STUTT GART, West Germany, Nov. 1—After six years at the center of power in the White House, and a year as President Nixon's chief of staff, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. assumed command of United States forces in Europe today in a ceremony that his predecessor, Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, did not attend.

General Haig, looking tanned but shivering in the late afternoon cold at his Patch Barracks headquarters here, will also take over from General Goodpaster as Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Belgium Dec. 15.

Asked about the absence of General Goodpaster, who is said to be "resentful" about President Ford's decision in September to name General Haig to the NATO post, the 49-year-old officer told reporters, "I think you should ask my predecessor that."

### Unanswered Questions

He did not answer questions about the Watergate scandals or Mr. Nixon's resignation in August. "I think it was Omar Bradley who once said the wise thing for old military men is to keep their mouths shut," he said, and added that he had not had any contact with Mr. Nixon

in recent weeks—"with him directly."

General Haig wore a drab-green overcoat and a green silk scarf over his uniform at the outdoor ceremonies, which were attended by American officers, their wives and children, and a gaggle of enlisted men and women of the command. He spoke without notes, received no applause, and met briefly with the press afterward.

Though he had retired from the military in August of 1973 to assume the White House chief of staff position, he said today that after the Nixon resignation, "President Ford asked me what I would like to do and I told him, 'Return to the military.'"

General Haig arrived here in a blue-and-white official 707 plane late Wednesday night. Only four officers—all of them Americans—met him at the plane, subordinates said.

General Goodpaster was not among them, though he will not give up his post as NATO commander until Dec. 15. General Goodpaster was here earlier this week, officers said, but left for Belgium before General Haig arrived, and will stay there until next month.

"Of course he's resentful," an army officer said, "but not so much of General Haig. He just doesn't want to be retired."

When rumors of the Haig appointment began floating in Europe in September, there was also resentment among some of the NATO allies—mainly The Dutch—because of the general's close association with the Watergate scandals.

West Germany, however, made it clear that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt did not share those feelings. Officials in Bonn say that Mr. Schmidt sent a letter to President Ford earlier this month welcoming General Haig's appointment and praising his political experience for what is, at NATO, largely a political job.

Asked about the reported opposition within NATO, General Haig said: "My appointment has been confirmed by the NATO Council. I'm confident my success will be measured by my accomplish-

ments in the job, and not by the past."

General Goodpaster has been here since 1969, and his career goes back to 1939. He is 59 years old. General Haig, who will be 50 on Dec. 2, was appointed by President Ford well before General Goodpaster expected to leave.

The post the younger man took over today is largely a paper organization, the United States European Command. Theoretically, General Haig is in charge of 310,000 troops of the Army, Air Force, and Navy, scattered through Western Europe and around the Mediterranean. Each service, however, has its own separate commander in Europe as well.

General Haig has told subordinates that he will spend the next month an a half here. "Getting out to see the troops." After Dec. 15, when he moves to the most important post in Belgium, the Stuttgart responsibilities will be in the hands of his deputy, George J. Eade, who is an Air Force general.