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# Haig Denies Politics in NATO Post

Brussels

General Alexander M. Haig Jr. yesterday brushed off any suggestion that he was named commander of allied forces in Europe simply because of his political ties to the Nixon White House.

"I feel qualified for the job," Haig told newsmen before assuming his new command at a ceremony at allied headquarters outside Brussels.

"I'm enthusiastic about it. I would like to be judged on my performance and not on any internal inhibitions those of you may have regarding how I got here."

He added, "I have been in much battle; I have been shot at; and I've participated in two conflicts, including command of battalion and brigade."

Asked if he might have to return to Washington to testify about Watergate, said, "Not as far as I am concerned. I do not expect it."

But he is due to testify about his qualifications for the allied command before a Senate committee in Washington next month.

Haig, asked if he got his job because he used to be White House chief of staff under President Nixon, said, "I reject that thesis."

But he added that no man could measure "how much luck and how much political pressure apply" in such appointments.

"I appreciate those who may be concerned about my experience," Haig said. "I do not feel self-conscious."

Haig, 50, took over from General Andrew J. Goodpaster, 59, who held the post for 5½ years. At a ceremony in West Germany November 1, when Haig assumed his other, twin command of U.S. forces in Europe, Goodpaster was absent and there were reports that he was angry at being replaced by the politically powerful Haig.

Goodpaster, 59, was present yesterday.

In his speech, he said he had hoped that his departure from Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe "might come just a little later."