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Rabbi Korff: Nixon "has deep regrets . . . and he agonizes. He is tormented."

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Nixon Admits He Erred On Watergate, Korff Says

By Kenneth Reich
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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Feb. 9—Former President Nixon's confidant, Rabbi Baruch Korff, said here today that Nixon told him last week that he recognized he had to leave the Presidency because what he had done in handling the Watergate scandal was wrong.

At a news conference at the San Clemente Inn, the rabbi first cautioned reporters that he was not quoting Nixon directly, but then added: "This is precisely what passed between us."

Korff heads the Justice Fund, which is collecting money to handle the former President's legal expenses. This was the rabbi's second visit to San Clemente in a month. He told reporters the fund has collected about \$110,000 so far.

Taken in full context, Korff's words about Nixon's attitude on Watergate indicated the former President may be moving toward broader admissions than he has made in the past.

The subject of Watergate came up when a reporter asked the rabbi whether, in his latest talks with Nixon, which he said extended for many hours over a four-day period, Watergate had been mentioned.

The rabbi said it had.

"He repeatedly said to me, 'I should not have allowed a climate to reverberate that would even lead to a Watergate,'" Korff reported.

"He did say, 'I should have just acted differently. I should not have yielded to considerations.'"

What considerations? the rabbi was asked.

Korff replied, "The matter of the political and national security frequently overlapped because the same man is in charge of both, somewhat. And he has deep regrets and profound regrets, and he agonizes. He is tormented."

Korff was then asked whether Nixon felt that what he had done was serious enough for him to leave office.

"Yes," the rabbi replied emphatically. "He said that, 'It was wrong of me, and because of it I left office.' He said that. He said that yesterday [Saturday]. 'I could not,' he continued, 'subject this nation to a state of bedlam.'"

In another report of Nixon's statements, the rabbi said the former President had told him that contrary to what Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) had said recently, he has "no aspiration" of re-emerging as a spokesman for the Republican Party.

Korff described Nixon as "visibly annoyed" at remarks made recently by his former White House counselor, Charles W. Colson, to the effect that Nixon had described Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger as "unstable" and expressed a lack of confidence in the competence of Gerald R. Ford before Mr. Ford became President.

The rabbi reported Nixon had told him, "I never would have selected Dr. Kissinger as

national security chairman and subsequently named him Secretary of State if he were unstable . . . and it is unfortunate for Mr. Colson to say that, particularly when Dr. Kissinger is faced with a mammoth task of reactivating the peace."

As for President Ford, Korff said Nixon had told him, "I have nothing but love and admiration for Jerry Ford," and had expressed confidence in him.

In contrast to what some other visitors to Nixon had said recently, Mr. Korff described the former President's physical and emotional state as low. He said Nixon told him he tries to conceal his misery from many of his visitors and staff.