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Nixon Offers to Testify

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Former President Nixon has offered to testify about his dealings with the Central Intelligence Agency and other issues under restrictive conditions to be considered by the Senate intelligence committee next week.

A committee official said last night that the proposed restrictions were laid down in a letter the committee received Nov. 13 from Nixon's lawyer, Herbert J. Miller Jr.

The committee ostensibly began dickering for the former President's testimony last summer amid hints that a subpoena ultimately might be necessary.

Nixon's lawyers, however,

could always contest a subpoena in the courts; the failure to resolve the issue before this could make litigation impractical. With the committee scheduled to complete its work by the end of February, some staff members reportedly favor accepting the restrictions the former President has laid down as the only way to secure his testimony at this point.

Reached in Idaho last night, Committee Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said, however, that he had "serious reservations" about the proposal and said he suspected that the 11-member committee would want to be present at any questioning of the former President instead

of the limited delegation that Nixon's attorneys had proposed.

The proposed restrictions for Nixon's deposition include:

—Testifying before only the ranking members of the committee such as Church and Vice Chairman John Tower (R-Tex.) at the Nixon home in San Clemente, Calif.

—An initial time limit of four hours, although this could be extended by mutual agreement.

—The committee's agreement that the former President is testifying voluntarily. This would facilitate

See NIXON, A6, Col. 1

NIXON, From A1

preserve Nixon's contention that the doctrine of executive privilege still protects him from being forced to testify. One committee official said Nixon also appeared to be reserving the right to invoke executive privilege whenever he chooses to block off a certain line of questioning. Church said he had not yet had a chance to study the proposal carefully, but said it appeared to him to be a case of "Nixon's lawyers engaging in a duel with the committee." As ranking GOP member on the committee, Tower reportedly considers the Nixon offer reasonable and favors accepting it.

Miller refused last night to comment on the proposal.

The Church committee has been seeking Nixon's testimony on a wide range of issues, from his short-lived approval in 1970 of the so-called Huston plan for spying on domestic dissidents to covert CIA operations in Chile directed against the late Salvador Allende.

According to the committee's interim report last week on CIA assassination scheming, Nixon personally issued the order that touched off an intense political espionage campaign against Allende in 1970. Nixon was also said to be willing to testify on all other issues under the committee's jurisdiction, such as improprieties by the FBI and domestic spying by the CIA, and reportedly would offer his views on how to reform the intelligence community and bring it under tighter control. A Senate committee official also said that while there would be no restriction as such on the topics that might be discussed, the former President could set a practical limit by simply refusing to continue past the four-hour mark. The question of whether Nixon's testimony would ever be made public was also left unsettled.