

Ex-Aide Thinks Nixon Knew Of Watergate in Advance

Washington

A former White House aide who had a closeup view of Richard M. Nixon as president said yesterday he believes Nixon knew in advance of plans for the Watergate break-in at Democratic party headquarters.

The assertion was made by Alexander P. Butterfield, who first disclosed that Nixon had a secret taping system for White House telephones and offices. The tapes eventually led to Nixon's resignation under threat of impeachment.

Butterfield, now a business executive in Burlingame, drew an unusually harsh portrait of Nixon as president in a letter that is now being circulated around the nation.

Nixon wrote in his memoirs, published last week, that he was surprised to hear of the Watergate burglary and the arrest of one burglar who was employed by the Committee for Re-election of the President in 1972. Nixon said he dismissed it as a preposterous prank.

But Butterfield said in his letter — and reaffirmed in a



ALEXANDER BUTTERFIELD
Harsh words for ex-president

telephone interview — that he felt that Nixon surely knew of the Watergate break-in before the event.

"Under no circumstances — under absolutely no circumstances — would Mr. Nixon's people on the White House staff or at the Committee to Re-elect the President undertake any action, much less one of the magnitude of a break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters, without the clear and expressed approval (direction, actually) of the President," Butterfield wrote in the letter.

"I'm amazed at how many Americans don't yet understand the extent to which Richard Nixon was in charge at the White House and monitored and supervised every operation, every activity, every program and every plan," he added.

"It's hard for me to comprehend how some people . . . can still believe his aides, 'unbridled,' got him into trouble. That's such a fable!" Butterfield wrote.

Butterfield, a retired Air Force colonel, also gave an intimate glimpse of Nixon as president in his letter. The letter was written May 25, 1977, to Dr. David A. Marcus, a Palm Springs dentist who is writing a book about Watergate.

Marcus recently sent copies of

the letter to several hundred persons who were on the White House "enemies list." One of those copies was obtained by the Los Angeles Times.

While Nixon was a hard-working president with a vision of great accomplishments for the nation, he was flawed by personal ambition and a relentless effort to put down his adversaries, Butterfield wrote.

"I saw Richard Nixon up close 20 times a day and can vouch for the fact that he never really relaxed," he wrote.

"He was never humble. He could be observed on almost an hourly basis violating that key precept of elective office: Put the public trust above personal ambition.

"And of course along with that King Richard — Ruler of the Free World — I'll show those bastards' complex was an unmistakable arrogance.

"It seemed whoever he spoke to cordially in the Oval Office, staff aide or guest, he orally abused upon the person's departure . . . and usually with vehemence."

Interviewed about his comments, Butterfield said "the bastards" was Nixon's term for his political adversaries, some members of the press and what Nixon called the "New England Establishment."

"I heard him say a number of times that he had great resentment against people who played up to him when he was senator or vice president and then when he came to New York, after being defeated (for governor) in California, they would not invite him to join their men's clubs," Butterfield said in the telephone interview.

"No, not a goddamn one," he quoted Nixon as saying.

He has had no contact with Nixon — even in writing — since he left the White House to head the Federal Aviation Administration in March, 1973, Butterfield added.

But for nearly four years he sat in an office next to Nixon and served as top-level aide on appointments and Cabinet matters.

"I have as great an insight into his character and habits as anyone," Butterfield said.

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