

Administration of Richard Nixon

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Week Ending Saturday, October 27, 1973

Watergate Special Prosecution Force and Department of Justice

*Remarks of Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler
Announcing Discharge of the Special Prosecutor,
Abolishment of the Force, and Departure From Office
of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General.
October 20, 1973*

I know many of you are on deadline. I have a brief statement to give you at this time, and following the reading of the statement we will have an exchange of a series of letters relating to action which President Nixon has taken tonight.

President Nixon has tonight discharged Archibald Cox, the Special Prosecutor in the Watergate case. The President took this action because of Mr. Cox's refusal to comply with instructions given Friday night through Attorney General Richardson, that he was not to seek to invoke the judicial process further to compel production of recordings, notes, or memoranda regarding private Presidential conversations.

Further, the office of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force has been abolished as of approximately 8 p.m. tonight. Its function to investigate and prosecute those involved in the Watergate matter will be transferred back into the institutional framework of the Department of Justice, where it will be carried out with thoroughness and vigor.

In his statement Friday night, and in his decision not to seek Supreme Court review of the Court of Appeals decision with regard to the Watergate tapes, the President sought to avoid a constitutional confrontation by an action that would give the grand jury what it needs to proceed with its work with the least possible intrusion of Presidential privacy. That action taken by the President in the spirit of accommodation that has marked American constitutional history was accepted by responsible leaders in

Congress and the country. Mr. Cox's refusal to proceed in the same spirit of accommodation, complete with his announced intention to defy instructions from the President and press for further confrontation at a time of serious world crisis, made it necessary for the President to discharge Mr. Cox and to return to the Department of Justice the task of prosecuting those who broke the law in connection with Watergate.

Before taking this action, the President met this evening with Attorney General Richardson. He met with Attorney General Richardson at about 4:45 today for about 30 minutes.

The Attorney General, on hearing of the President's decision, felt obliged to resign, since he believed the discharge of Professor Cox to be inconsistent with the conditions of his confirmation by the Senate.

As Deputy Attorney General, Mr. William Ruckelshaus refused to carry out the President's explicit directive to discharge Mr. Cox. He, like Mr. Cox, has been discharged of further duties effective immediately.

Professor Cox was notified of his discharge by the Acting Attorney General, the Solicitor General, Robert H. Bork, professor of law from Yale University.

We have available for you now the exchange of letters between Attorney General Richardson and the President and the other correspondence.

NOTE: Mr. Ziegler spoke at 8:22 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

For the text of the letters, see the following two items.

Attorney General of the United States

*Exchange of Letters Between the President and
Elliot L. Richardson on Mr. Richardson's Resignation.
October 20, 1973*

October 20, 1973

Dear Elliot:

It is with the deepest regret and with an understand-