

DECLASSIFIED  
 Authority E012958  
 By KE NARA Date 6-28-07

12977  
 EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
 UNTIL 9:00 PM EDT

August 15, 1973

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

On May 17th the Senate Select Committee began its hearings on Watergate. Five days later, on May 22nd, I issued a detailed statement discussing my relationship to the matter. I stated categorically that I had no prior knowledge of the Watergate operation and that I neither knew of nor took part in any subsequent efforts to cover it up. I also stated that I would not invoke Executive Privilege as to testimony by present and former members of my White House staff with respect to possible criminal acts then under investigation.

Thirty-five witnesses have testified so far. The record is more than 7,500 pages and some two million words long. The allegations are many, the facts are complicated, and the evidence is not only extensive but very much in conflict. It would be neither fair nor appropriate for me to assess the evidence or comment on specific witnesses or their credibility. That is the function of the Senate Committee and the courts. What I intend to do here is to cover the principal issues relating to my own conduct which have been raised since my statement of May 22, and thereby to place the testimony on those issues in perspective.

I said on May 22nd that I had no prior knowledge of the Watergate operation. In all the testimony, there is not the slightest evidence to the contrary. Not a single witness has testified that I had any knowledge of the planning for the Watergate break-in.

It is also true, as I said on May 22nd, that I took no part in, and was not aware of, any subsequent efforts to cover up the illegal acts associated with the Watergate break-in.

In the summer of 1972, I had given orders for the Justice Department and the FBI to conduct a thorough and aggressive investigation of the Watergate break-in, and I relied on their investigation to disclose the facts. My only concern about the scope of the investigation was that it might lead into CIA or other national security operations of a sensitive nature. Mr. Gray, the Acting Director of the FBI, told me by telephone on July 6th that he had met with General Walters, that General Walters had told him the CIA was not involved, and that CIA activities would not be compromised by the FBI investigation. As a result, any problems that Mr. Gray may have had in coordinating with the CIA were moot. I concluded by instructing him to press forward vigorously with his own investigation.

During the summer of 1972, I repeatedly asked for reports on the progress of the investigation. Every report I received was that no persons, other than the seven who were subsequently indicted, were involved in the Watergate operation. On September 12, at a meeting attended by me, and by the Cabinet, senior members of the White House staff and a number of legislative leaders, Attorney General Kleindienst reported on the investigation. He informed us that it had been the most intensive investigation since the assassination of President Kennedy, and that it had been established that no one at the White House, and no higher-ups in the campaign committee, were involved. His report seemed to be confirmed by the action of the Grand Jury on September 15th when it indicted only the

Text of President Richard M. Nixon's statement in which he reassures the nation that he had no prior knowledge of the Watergate affair and that he took no part in a cover-up. He emphasizes that he has done all in his power not to hamper Congressional hearings trying to get to the bottom of this matter. Nixon has been implicated in the cover-up of the 6/17/1972 burglary of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) offices at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. White House, 15 Aug. 1973. U.S. Declassified Documents Online, [link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FCK2349680622%2FUSDD%3Fu%3Droosesc%26sid%3Dbookmark-USDD](https://link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FCK2349680622%2FUSDD%3Fu%3Droosesc%26sid%3Dbookmark-USDD). Accessed 9 Dec. 2025.