



ALEXANDER HAIG, 1924-

Though he served in a variety of military and government posts in his career, perhaps the nation's most enduring memory of Alexander Haig is as the grim-faced White House chief of staff who kept the curious at a distance at the end of the Nixon presidency. A low-ranking West Point graduate, Haig early showed a propensity to float toward the top in a series of military and government posts. In the early 1960s he joined Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance's staff, soon leaving that post to command an infantry battalion in Vietnam.

Haig reappeared in government service in late 1968, joining the staff of national security adviser Henry Kissinger. There he acquired a reputation as a loyal worker, dutifully supporting controversial actions like the bombing of Hanoi late in the war. In 1970 Haig began a series of trips to Vietnam to report to President Nixon on conditions there. Two years later he was engaged in full-scale shuttle diplomacy between Washington and the Thieu government, and was chiefly responsible for securing Thieu's acquiescence to the 1973 cease-fire. Haig became closer to Nixon when he served as advance man for the President's 1972 China visit.

Thereafter Haig served as Army Vice-chief of Staff, but gradually assumed more power as one White House staff member after another toppled during the Watergate debacle. During those months President Nixon increasingly turned to Haig, who encouraged him to hang tough and assembled a legal staff for him. Haig also presided over the transfer of power when the 'smoking gun' tape was revealed and, some say, advised the President to resign. Haig emerged from the Nixon presidency mildly tainted by Watergate but, at least, with no legal charges lodged against him. He went on to become head of NATO and, briefly, Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan.