

Sirica Disbands Panel on Electronics, But Jaworski May Seek Experts' Aid

By ANTHONY RIPLEY

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 9—A panel of six electronics experts, assembled by the United States District Court to study White House tape recordings, has been disbanded by the court but may be kept at work by the special Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski.

A spokesman for Mr. Jaworski said he thought that the panel would be asked to aid in the continuing grand jury investigation of possible destruction of evidence in the tapes case.

It was this panel that pinpointed erasures and re-recordings on a critical tape that was made three days after the Watergate burglary in one of former President Nixon's offices. An 18½-minute section of the tape contained only a buzzing sound.

Judge John J. Sirica has turned the matter over to the special prosecutor for possible grand jury action. No indictments have been returned involving the gap, and Mr. Jaworski's spokesman would shed no light on whether the gap would become another element in the alleged Watergate cover-up or might lead to a separate indictment and trial.

Judge Sirica mailed letters Friday to the six panel members thanking them for their work and asking them to keep silent for a time.

The letter stated in part:

"The court has determined that the advisory panel on White House tapes, on which

you have served, will be disbanded effective this date. This action releases you from any further obligation to the court and from any restrictions placed upon you by the court during the course of your service.

"However, for the sake of caution, the court urges that you refrain from public comment about the panel's work until after a jury has been sequestered in the 'Watergate cover-up case.'"

One of Judge Sirica's aides said the decision had been made because further investigation of White House tapes recorded during Richard M. Nixon's Presidency had been turned over by the judge to one of the Watergate grand juries.

Also, the court aide said, "our budget is pretty well exhausted." An estimated total of \$100,000 has been spent thus far on tapes investigations.

The spokesman for the special prosecutor said that Mr. Jaworski had been consulted before Judge Sirica's move and that the experts might be used "to help us prepare for trial" rather than to continue trying to establish the integrity and authenticity of six remaining tapes.

All six members of the panel, reached by telephone, declined to comment publicly, though one added that they were eager to make all of their work public.

"We're foaming at the mouth," he said.

The panel consisted of:

Richard H. Bolt, of Bolt, Beranek & Newman, Inc., Cambridge, Mass.

Prof. Thomas G. Stockham of the University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Mark R. Weiss, of Nicolet Scientific Corporation, Northvale, N. J.

James L. Flanagan of Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, N. J.

Franklin S. Cooper, president of Haskins Laboratories, in New Haven.

John G. McKnight, of Cupertino, Calif., a consultant to the Scully-Metrotech Division of the Dictaphone Corporation.

Following the dismissal last Oct. 20 of the former special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, for pressing too hard on the tapes issue, the White House agreed to turn over nine tapes Mr. Cox had been seeking.

On Oct. 31, the White House said that two of the nine were missing and had never been recorded. On Nov. 21, it was revealed that one of the tapes had an 18½-minute gap. That same day Judge Sirica appointed the panel whose members were jointly approved by Mr. Jaworski and Mr. Nixon.