

LEVEL 2 - 1 OF 15 STORIES

Proprietary to the United Press International 1984

February 14, 1984, Tuesday, BC cycle

SECTION: Domestic News

LENGTH: 324 words

HEADLINE: De Lorean tapes remain with the FBI

DATELINE: NEW ORLEANS

KEYWORD: Delorean

BODY:

A federal judge says a New Orleans private investigator cannot immediately get back tape recordings seized during a narcotics investigation of automaker John De Lorean.

U.S. District Judge Frederick Heebe said Monday the 11 audio and one video tape were seized properly by the FBI.

"The trial of John De Lorean is presently in progress, and so the government has a continuing interest in the tapes," Heebe said. "The plaintiff is not entitled to the return of his tapes at this time."

The tapes were fished out of a Kenner drainage canal by Jefferson Parish sheriff's deputies when they located a car stolen from Gordon Novel. The investigator, who claims the FBI took the tapes from deputies improperly, has been working for De Lorean.

De Lorean is scheduled to go on trial in Los Angeles on March 6 on a charge of attempting to possess cocaine.

In his petition to the judge, Novel said Col. Jimmy Miller of the Sheriff's Department signed an agreement under which any other agency that wanted the tapes had to first obtain a court order.

The videotape, according to Novel, is of an interview between TV newswoman Barbara Walters and Christina De Lorean, the automaker's wife.

Miller said he listened to the audio tapes before giving them to the FBI and thought they were "of extreme interest to federal authorities involved in the prosecution."

The tapes reproduced conversations between Novel and G. Gordon Liddy, a former aide to President Richard Nixon; Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt, and investigators for syndicated columnist Jack Anderson.

Miller said one tape referred to Vickie Morgan, the purported former mistress of the late Alfred Bloomingdale.

Miss Morgan was killed July 7, and her ex-boyfriend, Marvin Pancoast, was charged with her death. After the slaying, California lawyer Robert Steinberg claimed to have videotapes of Miss Morgan in sexual encounters with

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