

Sirica To Release ^{F Post 11/3/74} 17 Watergate Tapes

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica said Monday he will have turned over by Tuesday nearly half the tapes sought by the special Watergate prosecutor for use in the Watergate cover-up trial.

Sirica, who has been listening to the tapes to decide their relevancy to the case, said 17 new tapes will go to the prosecutor.

Added to 10 already provided, that makes 27 of the 64 conversations covered by the Supreme Court order directing former President Richard M. Nixon to furnish the tapes to Sirica.

Eight other sought-after conversations were never recorded and the tape of a ninth conversation could not be found, according to White House lawyers.

Speaking with newsmen, Sirica had no comment when asked if the trial, now scheduled for Sept. 9, might be postponed.

Sirica has turned down attempts by defense attorneys for postponement.

Meanwhile, former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell formally requested a postponement of the trial on grounds that Nixon's resignation and the televised House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings make it impossible to select an impartial jury now.

In a motion filed with Sirica, Mitchell's attorneys said, "President Nixon's forced resignation has heightened the public view that Nixon and his close associates (such as) Mitchell, were criminal conspirators in Watergate . . .

"The pro-impeachment members of the committee argued to the nationwide audience that Nixon was guilty along with Mitchell and the other conspirators."

The defense lawyers said special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski had opposed postponement in part because there was previously no indication when wide-spread publicity about Watergate might end.

"With Nixon gone," the brief said, "the nightmare of Watergate is going to diminish and in the foreseeable future the climate is going to be more con-

clusive to providing these defendants a fairer trial than they could receive on Sept. 9, 1974."

Another of the defendants, former White House domestic affairs adviser John D. Ehrlichman, already had asked for a minimum two months delay and Sirica said Monday he expects the same request from lawyers for the other four defendants.

The judge said he hopes to hold a hearing on the motions for postponement late this week.

Seat Belt Lock System Optional Backed By House

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Monday voted overwhelmingly to make optional the seat-belt interlock system that currently comes with all new cars.

The system that requires drivers to buckle up before they can start their cars generally would disappear, judging from congressmen who told the House that their constituents are fed up with the idea.

The House approved the option provision by a vote of 339 to 49, and then went on to pass by non-record voice vote a new car and school safety bill.

The seat-belt amendment, pushed by Rep. Louis C. Wyman, R-N.H., would apply to car production as soon as the bill is signed into law.

In addition, Wyman's measure would make air bags optional instead of mandatory when they become ready for production, which would be on the 1976 models, as it now stands.

If Wyman's amendment survives, managers of the bill said, the effect would be no air bags. The bags would have to be mass-produced to carry a realistic price tag, the managers said, otherwise they will be an unpopular option probably costing around \$700.

The House bill would have to be reconciled with a Senate version which has a no seat-belt provision, and Senate opposition could kill the Wyman amendment.

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