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Tape Indicates Nixon Had Early News Of Watergate

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Judiciary Committee heard a tape Tuesday which sources said indicates President Nixon discussed the Watergate cover-up four days earlier than he has publicly said he learned of it.

No member would comment publicly on details of evidence heard in the closed sessions. But sources said a tape recording of Nixon listening to other tapes and commenting on them confirmed earlier claims that the President talked of White House involvement in the cover-up as early as March 17, 1973.

Nixon has said he first learned of the Watergate cover-up on March 21, 1973, when John W. Dean III, then White House counsel, told him.

The comments came after members returned to their hearing room from a lunch break. Members commenting after the morning session, when only part of the tape had been played, said it was ambiguous and unclear.

One committee source said the tape, of Nixon talking to several aides on June 4, 1973,

confirmed a statement made May 21 by committee Chairman Peter Rodino, D-N.J., that Nixon's remarks on the tape about the March 17 discussion "includes a discussion of the Watergate matter and possible involvement of White House personnel and others."

Earlier, commenting on the morning session, Rep. George Danielson, D-Calif., said he heard Nixon, on the June 4 tape, talking about March 17 and March 21 conversations with Dean.

Danielson said there was mention of Watergate in the President's comments about the March 17 tape. The White House has denied there was any such discussion of Watergate matters on that tape, a partial transcript of which has been released.

But Danielson also said nothing in the portion of the tape heard so far had demonstrated presidential knowledge of the cover-up on the 17th.

Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., also said there was mention of the conversation of the 17th and said, "There's some ambiguities in it" regarding whether

Nixon knew of the cover-up on that date.

The committee hopes to complete its hearings of evidence by Friday. Next week it is scheduled to consider procedural questions such as the calling of witnesses, Nixon's defense arguments and public release of evidence.

Meanwhile, James D. St. Clair, Nixon's Watergate lawyer, said that committee staff memos on impeachment evi-

dence that have been leaked to newsmen "have been accurately described as very misleading."

Fourteen memos were drafted for committee members by William P. Dixon, a lawyer on the committee staff, and half have been leaked.

The staff of the Senate Watergate Committee has called for strict new limits on the role of money in presidential elections. In a draft report on cam-

paign financing, the committee staff, however, took no position on proposals to fund elections from the federal Treasury.

Former Atty. Gen. Richard G. Kleindienst testified he stayed deliberately aloof from the original Watergate investigation to avoid allegations of improper influence. At a congressional hearing, Kleindienst said he was assured by aides at the Justice Department there See TAPE, Page A-5

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was not enough evidence until April 1973 to go beyond charging the original seven defendants in the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in.

The U.S. District Court began disciplinary proceedings against Kleindienst in his role as a lawyer because of his guilty plea in his testimony about the ITT case.

Former White House aides E. Howard Hunt Jr. and David R. Young were given immunity so they can testify at the Ellsberg break-in conspiracy trial next week.

The special prosecutor's office asked the U.S. Court of Appeals to overrule a federal district judge and restore Felipe DelDiego as a defendant in the Ellsberg break-in case. He had been dropped as a defendant when it was ruled he had been granted immunity.