

# Nixon Feared FBI Chief Would Divulge

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Former president Richard M. Nixon backed away from forcing aging FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover from office in late 1971, in part because he feared Hoover would disclose the secret, White House-ordered wiretaps of reporters and National Security Council aides suspected of leaking information.

The wiretaps later became a basis for one of the impeachment counts against Nixon that the House Judiciary Committee adopted in 1974.

The apprehension about Hoover was part of 60 hours of tapes of Nixon White House conversations made public yesterday by the National Archives. The recordings underscore Nixon's direct and detailed involvement in the scandals that tarred his presidency.

All of the recordings had been delivered to the Watergate Special Prosecution Force in the 1970s, but approximately 28 hours of the conversations were never previously released to the public.

The tapes illustrate Nixon's intimate involvement not only in the coverup of the June 1972 break-in at Democratic National Committee offices here, which became known as the Watergate scandal, but also in other controversies that eventually led to his resignation.

The tapes, for example, show Nixon directing strategy in the 1972 Senate confirmation hearings for Attorney General-designate Richard Kleindienst as they bogged down in controversy over the settlement the previous year of an antitrust case against the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

Nixon had ordered Kleindienst "to drop the goddamn thing" in an April 19, 1971, phone call because, as he said, trust-busters in the Justice Department were equating bigness with badness in seeking the breakup of burgeoning conglomerates.

"I don't know whether ITT is bad, good or indifferent. But there is not going to be any more antitrust action as long as I am in this chair," Nixon told aides just before talking with Kleindienst.

The Justice Department announced a settlement favorable to ITT in July 1971, triggering charges that the arrangement stemmed from an ITT pledge of \$400,000 to help finance the 1972 Republican National Convention.

Ironically, the tapes support Nixon's version that he ordered settlement of the ITT case on principle, but show he then created another problem for himself in 1972 as he orchestrated strategy for the Kleindienst hearings.

On March 30, 1972, Nixon was warned by White House aide Charles W. Colson that documents Colson had unearthed could tie Nixon to the settlement and cause "an explosion."

"I've looked at every shred of paper and . . . it scares the living daylights out of me," Colson said.

"There's no problem," Nixon insisted at one point, saying he had decided the case on its merits.

Haldeman, who was present, agreed, then had second thoughts. He said "it's a hell of a problem" because Attorney General John N. Mitchell and other witnesses had

testified under oath that Nixon was not involved in the settlement.

What was worse, Nixon was told, was that a memo from White House aide John D. Ehrlichman implicated the president in "the agreed-upon ends in the ITT case."

"Does John always write memoranda to people . . . ?" Nixon asked in apparent exasperation. "He shouldn't. He should use the god-damn phone."

ITT's files, Colson said, had been delivered to the Securities and Exchange Commission and were also "damaging" because they "contradict testimony we've given so far . . . ."

Haldeman: "Teddy [Kennedy (D-Mass.)] knows that the SEC has those files."

Colson: "He's asked for them."

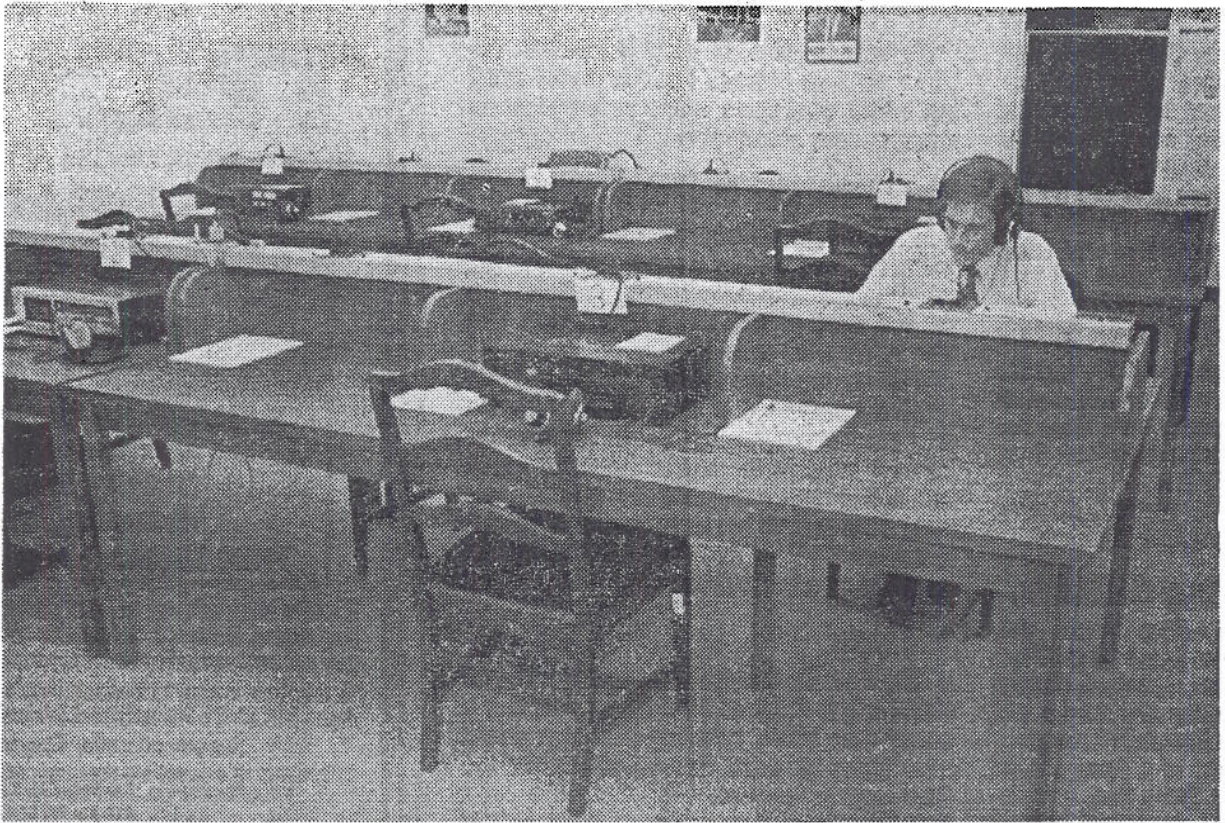
Nixon: "What does the SEC say?"

Colson: "Well, Bill Casey [then SEC chairman, later CIA director under President Ronald Reagan] says he's got it under control."

Haldeman: "Glad we got Casey there."

Instead of sending the files to Capitol Hill, Casey had them transferred to the Justice Department, a





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**A reporter listens to newly released tapes dating from the Watergate affair at National Archives facility in Alexandria.**

gambit that led congressional Democrats to complain for years, without effect, that it amounted to obstruction of justice.

Another tape, in October 1971, showed that Nixon wanted to get Hoover out but was afraid to try to force his resignation for fear the 77-year-old FBI director would "pull down the temple with him, including me."

At an Oct. 8, 1971, meeting devoted to trying to think of ways to get Hoover to resign, Mitchell told Nixon and Ehrlichman that the FBI director was "tearing the place up over [at the Justice Department] trying to get at" tapes and logs of the wiretapped conversations.

Ehrlichman said Hoover wanted them because they would give him "leverage with Mitchell and with you . . . because they're illegal."

If Hoover had copies, Ehrlichman told the president, "He'll beat you over the head with it."

The wiretaps on reporters came up again on Oct. 25, 1971, when another Oval Office conversation turned to what to do about Hoover.

This time, Nixon described Hoo-



# Wiretaps if Forced to Retire

ver as a man who was being unfairly attacked by liberal critics rather than as a problem to liberals and conservatives alike. While admitting that "Hoover upsets me," Nixon failed to decide what to do about him.

During the Oct. 25 meeting, Nixon gave a clear indication of the fear he felt about any public disclosure of the wiretaps.

The name of William Sullivan, who had been No. 3 in the FBI, in charge of investigative activities, enters the conversation. Sullivan was, according to Ehrlichman, "the man who executed all of your [the president's] instructions for the secret taps." Hoover had forced Sullivan to retire earlier that month.

After being assured that Sullivan "knows all of them [the taps]," Nixon asked: "Will he rat on us?"

"Uh, it depends on how he's treated," Ehrlichman replied.

Nixon then responded: "Can we do anything for him? I think we better."

After leaving the FBI, Sullivan worked briefly in the private sector, then returned to the Justice Department the next year as director of a drug enforcement project.

Hoover remained in office until his death on May 2, 1972. And he looked much better to Nixon after he was gone.

On March 1, 1973, the transcripts of the White House tapes show, the president was almost beside himself over testimony that Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray had just given at his Senate confirmation hearings about Watergate-related matters.

Gray said that as far as he was concerned, FBI records were "available to any senator" who wanted them.

"For Christ's sake, he must be out of his mind," Nixon declared. The FBI had never been so generous when he, Nixon, was a House member investigating the activities of State Department official Alger Hiss.

"Hoover also felt this—the government never, it wouldn't allow Hoover even to talk to me," Nixon protested.

If Gray provided records to the Senate, Nixon said, "the House will insist on the same rights . . . [and] you'll have Bella Abzug [a New York Democrat and vocal critic of

Nixon] asking for FBI stuff . . . . What the hell is he going to say? . . . . Some of those congressmen are, are damn near under communist discipline. That's the reason Hoover would never do it."

Dean interjected: "Some of them are from the Mafia, no doubt they're backed by the Mafia."

"You know," Nixon reflected a few minutes later, "Hoover was the guy . . . . Even at the later times, there was senility and everything . . . . He wasn't perfect, but he ran a tight ship. Goddamn it, that's the way."

Several tapes in early 1973, when the Senate Watergate Committee was gearing up for its later hearings, show Nixon and his aides in lengthy meetings trying to limit likely political damage from open hearings.

They also show how aware Nixon was of the details of the attempted coverup and his constant fears that those under investigation would "crack" and implicate him and senior administration officials in that effort.

On Feb. 14, Nixon told Ehrlichman: "Now damn it, we just can't have the appearance of a coverup." But a few minutes later, worried that investigators would uncover other White House misdeeds, he asks Ehrlichman, "How did you get [Watergate burglar E. Howard] Hunt's safe?"

He is told that Ehrlichman and John Dean took an envelope "full of stuff" from the safe and turned it over to Gray with instructions to get rid of it.

Nixon wonders whether Gray, whom he later nominated for FBI director, will reveal this if asked about it at his confirmation hearings.

"But really the problem is that one of these guys [under investigation] could crack," Nixon observed. "One of them could. The one, the one that could crack that it would really hurt would be Hunt . . . ."

Nine days later, he again tells Ehrlichman, "The coverup is worse than whatever comes out. It really is . . . . Unless, unless somebody is gonna go to jail. I'm not going to let anybody go to jail. That I promise you. That is the worst."

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*Staff writer Al Kamen and staff researchers Lucy Shackelford and Mary Lou White contributed to this report.*



# Excerpts From Archives' Transcripts

## of Nixon White House

### Tapes

The National Archives has custody of recorded conversations in the Nixon White House and yesterday it released transcripts of the remaining 60 hours of Watergate-related and other conversations not previously made public. Following are excerpts from those transcripts:

#### Hoover 'Oughta Resign'

*On Oct. 8, 1971, Nixon, Mitchell and Ehrlichman discuss their concerns about an investigation being run by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and whether Nixon would have to fire Hoover to cut the investigation short.*

**Mitchell:** Mr. President, Mr. Hoover is tearing up that damn place over there and, uh, we have, as I know it's a difficult problem. Uh, but I want to tell you that I've got to get him straightened out which may lead to a hell of a confrontation unless we find another way. . . .

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Mitchell:** . . . because he has practically shut [Assistant Attorney General Robert C.] Mardian from the bureau. . . .

**President:** I understand.

**Mitchell:** . . . And uh, I don't know how we about, about how we go about it, whether we reconsider Mr. Hoover and his exit or whether I just have to bear down on him. Lead to a confrontation or what, uh—

**Nixon:** Well as I told you, I will start off that practice. He says think it's right. He says I know whenever you—you've gotta get reelected (unintelligible). If you think that my presence is going to be really harmful, he says, I will resign. That's a pretty, pretty nice way of saying I don't think I am harmful. He was talking about his support on the Hill and so forth and so on.

**Mitchell:** Well, sure.

**Nixon:** Uh, as of the moment that is true that he oughta resign, for a lot of reasons, he oughta resign, in my view . . . he oughta resign while he's on top, before he becomes an issue in the current, the least of it is he's too old.

**Mitchell:** He's getting senile. . . .

**Nixon:** He should get the hell out of there. Now it may be, which I kind

of doubt, I don't know, maybe, maybe I could just call him in and talk him into resigning.

**Mitchell:** Shall I go ahead with this confrontation, then on this uh availability of the agents and their material?

**Nixon:** Sure . . . I mean, I'm willing to take it on if we have to do it. . . . There're some problems in it I mean, the day Hoover goes, why he goes out—you see, it's like all these people that say, well, the hell, they have got [Vice President Spiro T.] Agnew, change and, a certain area polls shows that Agnew at the present time would be liability more than an asset at a certain period of time. We know that Agnew can't leave that ticket unless he does.

Can't do that. And the same is true of Hoover—if I fired Hoover, if you think we've got an uprising and a riot now (unintelligible with noise) would be terrific Edgar Hoover has got to go. If he does go, he's got to go of his own volition—that's what we get down to, and that's why we're in a hell of a problem. And at the present time, I don't think, John, I think he'll stay until he's 100 years old. I think he loves it.

**Mitchell:** I think he's just a—

**Nixon:** He loves it.

**Mitchell:** He'll stay 'til he's buried there. Immortality. The way he's, the way he's handling that department—uh. . . .

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Mitchell:** . . . this, this stuff's gonna break . . .

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Mitchell:** . . . around it.

**Nixon:** Well, can I, uh, can we do, uh (unintelligible) I'm willing to fight him, but I don't. You see I think we've got to avoid the situation where he—he could leave with a black that is (unintelligible) I don't think he will. I think he's so damn patriotic and he knows very well that (unintelligible)

**Mitchell:** He's not, he's not gonna

blast us.

**Nixon:** . . . for us, but I'm, on the other hand, you can't have him go out of there mumbling. What do you want to do? I mean, if you think you want him out, I'll play the game with you, to him him in here and—

#### Pulitzer Prize for Burglar

*On June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate break-in, Nixon was able to joke with Colson about the possibility that the break-in would produce a Pulitzer Prize for someone. Colson thought the president was talking about a journalist, but Nixon wasn't.*

**Nixon:** (Laughs) No, no, you know what I mean, the guy that broke in.

**Colson:** Oh, Oh.

**Nixon:** . . . For Christ sakes, they gave the [New York] Times the Pulitzer Prize. . . . That's my point. . . . They give Pulitzer Prizes for publishing stolen documents.

**Colson:** . . . That's right, if, if you steal classified government documents and print them in a newspaper you get a Pulitzer Prize. . . . Political party headquarters, you get pilloried."

#### Targeting Impeachment Ad

*In that same conversation, Nixon and Colson took comfort in the idea that the break-in might pale into insignificance if a General Accounting Office investigation of an advertisement advocating impeachment in the New York Times turned out the way they hoped. The ad did not disclose its sponsors.*

**Colson:** The Times is on very weak ground, I think. . . . They're gonna argue that it wasn't a political ad, yet right in the body of the ad



# A WATERGATE CAST

SELECTED OFFICIALS MENTIONED IN THE TRANSCRIPTS



**Richard M. Nixon**  
37th President of the United States. Resigned Aug. 9, 1974, the only president to do so without completing his elected term.

Nixon now lives in suburban New Jersey.



**E. Howard Hunt Jr.**  
A former CIA agent who joined the White House to do undercover work and helped direct the burglary of the Democratic

National Committee chairman's office at the Watergate complex June 17, 1972.



**John W. Dean III**  
The former White House counsel, fired by the president, testified at Senate hearings that Nixon, his staff, campaign

aides and Justice Department had conspired to cover up facts about the Watergate break-in. Dean served four months in prison for his role in the coverup.



**Jeb Stuart Magruder**  
The deputy director of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President was present at meetings that led

to the Watergate break-in. He served seven months in prison for perjury and obstruction of justice. Magruder is now a Presbyterian minister.



**H.R. Haldeman**  
The president's chief of staff resigned in April 1973 amid charges of White House efforts to obstruct justice in the Watergate

case. He later served 18 months in prison for his role in the scandal.



**Charles W. Colson**  
Often described as one of Nixon's most devious aides, Colson proposed firebombing the Brookings

Institution and attempted to influence the jury in the Daniel Ellsberg Pentagon Papers trial by spreading "derogatory" information about Ellsberg—including his stolen psychiatric records. Colson spent seven months in prison on obstruction of justice charges. He is now chairman of the board of Prison Fellowship Ministries.



**John D. Ehrlichman**  
The president's No. 2 adviser helped to create the Watergate coverup and resigned in April 1973.

Ehrlichman served 18 months in prison for his role in the coverup.



**Donald Segretti**  
Segretti tried to undermine the primary campaigns of leading Democratic candidates in 1972. He served

4 1/2 months in prison for distributing false campaign materials and was disbarred in California for two years.

**John N. Mitchell**



Nixon's former law partner in New York City was attorney general during the president's first term, then resigned to become

chairman of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President in 1972. Mitchell served 19 months in prison for conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury. He died in 1988.

**Compiled by James Schwartz—The Washington Post**

SOURCES: The Washington Post, "Watergate: An Annotated Biography of Sources in English", "What Was Watergate"

BY PETER HOEY—THE WASHINGTON POST



was a request for funds for candidates who would vote to impeach you as president. So, they, they don't have much of a defense. Then they'll have to disclose who paid for the ad.

And if it turns out that that may be traced back to McGovern people, you, you can make this bugging incident look puny by comparison, because that ad was placed the day you

left the Soviet Union. And here you are coming back from negotiating with a, one of the most important, critically important meetings in modern history and they're placing an ad to impeach the president of the United States.

If that can be traced back to McGovern, I think it would, make, uh eavesdropping at the Watergate Ho-

tel look like child's play.

### 'We Know Our Enemies'

*On Sept. 15, 1972, Nixon, Haldeman and Dean are meeting in the Oval Office.*

Nixon: A lot of our own people come in here and they start sucking around the Georgetown set, all of a sudden they're just as bad as the others.

Haldeman: On the others, at least we know our enemies, some of our own, we think are our own, but they're worse than . . . the enemy because they just don't do any . . .

Nixon: They're disgusting.

### Paying Price for a Nominee

*On March, 30, 1972, Haldeman meets with Nixon to outline efforts to confirm Richard G. Kleindienst as attorney general.*

Haldeman: He has an assignment from the president—

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: —which is to deliver the confirmation [of Kleindienst].

Nixon: That's right, at whatever cost.

Haldeman: That's where we're crossed.

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: Now there're some prices which we can pay for delivering that but you don't know a god-damn thing about it—

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: —and shouldn't and

never will.

Nixon: 's right.

Haldeman: We've got a senator who wants a veterans hospital and we may give it to him.

Nixon: 's right.

Haldeman: And we've got another senator who wants something else—

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: —wants something taken out of the record, and we may take it out.

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: But there's nothing to do with Justice—

Nixon: Right.

Haldeman: —you don't know a damn thing about it.

Nixon: Right.

### 'Magruder Is a Problem'

*On Feb. 14, 1973, which was five*

*weeks before the Nixon-Dean conversation about a "cancer on the presidency," Nixon and Ehrlichman worried over which of those under investigation might talk to prosecutors.*

Nixon: But really the problem is that one of these guys could crack.

Ehrlichman: Sure.

Nixon: One of them could. The one, the one that could crack that it would really hurt would be [E. Howard] Hunt.

Ehrlichman: Uh, yea, [Jeb Stuart] Magruder could really hurt in a different direction.

Nixon: Well, Magruder, if he cracks, he goes to prison.

Ehrlichman: Yes.

Nixon: Well, I—unless, unless he takes immunity—is that what he would do?

Ehrlichman: Possibly . . .

Nixon: What do you think?

Ehrlichman: There are several of those guys that, that uh, we're relying on. [Haldeman aide and campaign treasurer Hugh W.] Sloan is not a problem.

Nixon: He doesn't know anything.

Ehrlichman: But, uh, uh, Magruder is a problem of, uh . . .

Nixon: Magruder knows a hell of a lot. . . . Let's face it. Didn't didn't Magruder perjure himself?

Ehrlichman: Yep.

### 'Glad We Have' Tape System

*On April 25, 1973, Nixon and Haldeman talk by telephone.*

Nixon: But, ah, incidentally, I, you know, I always wondered about that taping equipment but I'm damn glad we have it, aren't you?

Haldeman: Yes sir, I think it's, it's, just one thing I went through today it was very helpful.

Nixon: Yes. It's helpful because while it has some things in there that, ah—

Haldeman: (unintelligible)

Nixon: —we prefer we wouldn't have said but, on the other hand, we also have some things in there that we know we've, that I've said that weren't, that were pretty good, I mean.

Haldeman: That's right.

Nixon: 'This is wrong' and, ah, 'blackmail' and 'how much is this gonna cost' and so forth and so on. Then, on the other hand, I said well 'let's, as, we could get that, but how would you handle it.' But that, of course, those are all leading questions. I don't know how you analyze it but I don't know. . . .

Haldeman: I, I, I really don't think it, it would be, if it all get, if that comes out, it's, it's another hard thing to explain, but I think it's explainable.

Nixon: Right.