

Nixon Tapes Called 'Ultimate Evidence'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon has made his decision on the release of White House tape recordings and will send that decision to the Senate Watergate committee Monday, a Nixon spokesman said Friday.

But Deputy Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren gave no hint about what the decision might be. Published reports said, however, the decision would be to deny the committee's request for the tapes which could become the ultimate witness at the Senate Watergate hearings.

It was disclosed earlier this week at the hearings that since 1971 Nixon had been recording conversations and telephone calls at the White House and the Executive Office Building. The Watergate committee feels the tapes could go a long way toward clearing up glaring discrepancies in the testimony of several witnesses and define, at least to some degree, the extent of any knowledge Nixon may have had of the Watergate affair and cover-up.

Nixon already has refused to turn other White House records over to the committee, citing the twin doctrines of separation of powers and executive privilege.

John D. Ehrlichman, Nixon's former chief domestic affairs adviser, said he hopes the White House will produce the tapes.

"I think they will be the ultimate evidence," Ehrlichman said in an interview with Gerald Seymour of Britain's Independent Television News.

Ehrlichman, who has himself been accused in testimony before the Senate committee of complicity in the cover-up of the Watergate burglary, said he had not known his conversations with Nixon were being taped but said he would have nothing to worry about if the tapes were made public.

"Thinking back, I may have said some things about some people to the President that were very frank and candid and unvarnished but as far as events and circumstances or

my position in this whole controversy, I don't think I have a thing to worry about as far as those tapes are concerned," Ehrlichman said. "I'm delighted they are there."

Warren said Nixon would transmit his decision in the tapes in a letter to Watergate committee Chairman Sam L. Ervin Jr., D-N.C. The White House said previously that Nixon planned to work on the letter during a weekend stay at Camp David, Md.

Leaving the hospital after a

week-long bout with viral pneumonia, Nixon returned to the White House briefly and told a gathering of his staff in the Rose Garden, "Let others wallow in Watergate, we are going to do our job."

Warren would not say wheth-

er presidential conversations are still being taped and whether there will be recordings of Nixon's Tuesday and Wednesday meetings with the Shah of Iran.

As for Nixon's promised meeting with Ervin, Warren said he had nothing new to say about it and that no date has been set.

On a related matter, the FBI set out on a full-scale investigation of the hoax telephone call which led the Watergate committee to believe Thursday that the White House had agreed to turn over the tapes. Ervin too the call from a man who said he was Secretary of the Treasury George P. Shultz. The man told Ervin the tapes would be turned over for the committee's use.

Ervin announced the development at the hearing, on nationwide television, but had to rescind it within 30 minutes, when the real Shultz informed Ervin it was a bad joke.

The FBI, conceding Friday the case would be a hard one to solve because the telephone call can't be traced, interviewed individuals who had talked to the caller but wouldn't say if any progress was made.

At the Watergate hearings Friday, a former assistant attorney general, Robert C. Mardian, said Nixon was so concerned about White House security leaks in mid-1971 that he expressed fears about world peace and his own ability to govern.

Mardian said the remark was prompted by information that J. Edgar Hoover might be able to use secret wiretap tapes as a club to prolong his tenure as director of the FBI. The tapes were described as "some very sensitive national security surveillance logs," and were made from taps on telephones of staff members of the National Security Council and newsmen.

In other Watergate-related developments, one of the conspirators, G. Gordon Liddy, refused to take the swearing-in oath when he appeared Friday before a House subcommittee investigating possible CIA connections to the Watergate scandal. The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Lucien Nedzi, D-Mich., said the panel would "take all necessary steps to effect a citation" against Liddy for contempt of Congress.