

President Ordered Tapes From FBI To White House

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WASHINGTON (AP) — A former assistant attorney general testified today that President Nixon personally asked him to get tapes of White House-ordered telephone taps away from the FBI and into the White House.

Robert C. Mardian told the Senate Watergate committee he was summoned to the Western White House by Nixon after an FBI associate director had warned that the politically sensitive tapes might come into possession of J. Edgar Hoover.

The tapes of bugged conversations by newsmen and employees of the National Security Council were found this spring in the safe of former White House domestic counsel John D. Ehrlichman.

They were made as part of an administration effort to end what it called national security leaks during 1970.

Mardian, in his second day of testimony before the committee, said he was called in early summer 1971 by William Sullivan, then associate director of the FBI under Hoover.

Sullivan "told me he wanted to talk to me about a very sensitive matter. He said he and Hoover were not getting along very well. He anticipated his removal as associate director.

"He told me there were some very sensitive national security surveillance logs that ... were kept in his safe in his office.

"He felt that the highly sensitive nature of tapes were

such they should not be kept there, particularly if he were to be removed from office.

"My recollection is he thought Hoover might use these tapes for the purpose of preserving his position as director of the FBI."

Mardian said he told Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and heard nothing further until July, when he was asked to fly on short notice to meet the President in San Clemente, Calif.

"The President directed me to obtain the reports from Mr. Sullivan and deliver them to Mr. (John D.) Ehrlichman," said Mardian.

"The reason at the time was to keep Hoover from having possession of the records?" asked Sen. Herman E. Talmadge, D-Ga.

"You'll have to draw your own conclusion," said Mardian.

Mardian also confirmed that "the tapes concerned electronic surveillance authorized by the President at the request of the National Security Council."

Mardian, who quit the Justice Department in 1972 to join the Nixon campaign, also testified that a conversation he had with Mitchell a week after the Watergate break-in made him assume Mitchell had at least gone along with advance plans to wiretap the Democratic national headquarters.

Mardian, who left the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department to join President Nixon's re-election campaign, swore he made it clear to his associates shortly after the break-in that "I did not want to be involved in Watergate or its ramifications."

"They knew Bob Mardian wanted out," he said, and he withdrew from the cover-up activities within a month after the June 17, 1972, bugging of Democratic headquarters was discovered.