

# Gesell Told Watergate Tapes Could Sell as Low as \$88

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The major broadcasting networks told U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard Gesell yesterday that the public could purchase complete copies of the White House tapes played at the Watergate cover-up trial for as little as \$88.

The networks asked Gesell to make final his Dec. 5 order allowing the tapes to be copied and played publicly over the objections of former President Nixon.

Gesell originally said he would not make the order final until he received from the networks a proposed plan under which the tapes could be duplicated. The brief filed yesterday put forth such a plan.

Last week, Nixon also asked Gesell to make his order final so that it can be appealed.

The networks agreed, but asked that the judge's final order include instructions for

duplicating the tapes so that both the questions of whether they can be made public and how they should be made public can be appealed at the same time.

The network proposal, submitted to the court Friday and made public yesterday, would contract with a Cambridge, Mass., firm to make a master copy of the tapes. It would contain only the conversations played during the cover-up trial.

The master copy then could be duplicated by other firms for distribution to the public, the networks said, suggesting that at least 100 copies be produced.

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They said as many as 40 seven-inch reels might be needed to record 22 hours of conversation — bringing the total cost to between \$88 and \$160.

The Cambridge firm, BBN Engineering, earlier copied the original White House tapes for the special prosecutor's office and the Watergate trial.

There was no indication when Gesell would make his order final, or if he would adopt the networks' suggested process for duplication of the tapes.

The broadcasters seeking to make the tapes public are NBC, ABC, CBS, PBS, Warner Communications and the Radio Television News Directors Association.