

Nixon Set to Explain Tape Stand on TV

'A Close Case'

By Tim O'Brien

Washington Post Staff Writer

Former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson said yesterday that "the case is close" on whether President Nixon is innocent or guilty of criminal offenses in the Watergate scandals.

The disputed Watergate tapes "could very well tip it one way or another," he said, adding, "A failure to produce tapes would, I think, legitimately give rise to adverse inferences as to any ambiguities that otherwise exist."

Richardson, who resigned last fall during the "Saturday Night Massacre" episode involving the firing of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, said he does not think there is public evidence of any specific criminal offense by the President. "What would

See CASE, A5, Col. 1

Talks Tonight

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon will go on nationwide television tonight in an attempt to explain why he is only partially complying with a House Judiciary Committee subpoena, according to informed White House sources.

These sources said Mr. Nixon is prepared to hand over transcripts of his 42 telephone and face-to-face conversations asked for in a committee subpoena but not the tapes or other records of the conversations.

There have been unconfirmed reports that the White House has edited the transcripts that are to be turned over to delete material not considered germane.

It is not clear whether the President will provide for some system to verify the

See PRESIDENT, A7, Col. 1

Richardson Terms Nixon Case 'Close'

CASE, From A1

bother me is the pattern," he said.

"I don't think that the evidence that we know about as newspaper readers, or television listeners, is quite enough," he said. "I think the case is close, and this, of course, is who the tapes are [as] important as they are."

Referring to charges of a cover-up of the Watergate scandals and campaign contributions made in exchange for White House favors, Richardson said he does not think there is sufficient evidence "directly to implicate the President." But he said he is bothered by "the cumulative pattern of these things surrounding the President in each case, involving somebody next to him in responsibility..."

The President's failure to comply fully with a House Judiciary Committee request for the so-called Watergate tapes "justifies an adverse inference" on the issue of Mr. Nixon's personal responsibility, Richardson declared.

Appearing on the television program "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC), Richardson said that merely giving the committee edited transcripts of the tapes would fail to meet the command of the panel's subpoena. The issue of the tapes would fail to meet the command of the panel's subpoena. The issue of presidential confidentiality, he argued, has been largely mooted by Mr. Nixon's earlier decision to release some of the White House-guarded tapes.

Outside of a straightfor-

ward turnover of the tapes, Richardson suggested that a compromise might be reached whereby top committee members and lawyers would meet with the President's counsel "to go over the tapes and decide what is relevant to the committee's needs."

The key element to be preserved in any such compromise, he suggested, would be the Judiciary Committee's right to exercise some independent judgment about what is relevant to its impeachment inquiry.

Asked if he would like to be President himself, Richardson said, "Well, I would... I would in the sense that that if the opportunity were really there... The question of what I am going to do about it is something else again."

Sounding like a candidate already, Richardson said, "I have a lot of experience in public service in positions of major responsibility... I find that I enjoy being in the position of dealing with important issues. I found that I have been able to work effectively with people in large organizations, with the Congress and, I think, even the press."

Meanwhile on "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP), Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) said turning over transcripts of the tapes would probably not be considered adequate—nor would it suffice to have only a few top congressmen listen to them. "If two or three members or four members are going to know what's on the tapes, they might as well as go the whole way," he said.

PRESIDENT, From A1

authenticity of the transcripts.

One proposal that has been under discussion at the White House is an invitation to the committee's chairman, Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.), and ranking minority member, Edward Hutchinson (R-Mich.), to study original material.

But the President's final decision on this and on other key issues in his response to the committee was undetermined when he left for a weekend at Camp David, according to White House sources.

Mr. Nixon met at Camp David yesterday with White House chief of staff Alexander Haig Jr. and press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler before secluding himself to work on his television speech.

Officially, the White House position was that the President had reached no decision even whether to make the television speech, let alone on what he would say if he does make it.

The President has until 10 a.m. Tuesday to comply with the Judiciary Committee's subpoena. White House sources said that on or before this deadline the committee will receive transcripts of the 42 conversations and other unspecified material.

Publicly, the White House has been optimistic about the impact of the transcripts. White House counselor Dean Burch told the Re-

publican National Committee on Friday that it means "that the end of Watergate will be in sight."

Privately, however, the White House is aware that substituting the transcripts for the original record of the conversations will not satisfy either the Democratic members or an overwhelming majority of the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee. It is for this reason that some system of verification has been under discussion.

In his speech Friday, Burch said the evidence that Mr. Nixon would turn over to the committee, which is considering the President's impeachment, would be "compelling and persuasive." Burch said he had discussed his speech with Mr. Nixon beforehand.

Whatever the President does with respect to the committee, he is determined to continue his attempts to regain the confidence of the American people, who, Burch, said would be the ultimate jury on the Watergate issue.

The President has made maximum use of this strategy by largely limiting his appearances to friendly audiences, such as the one he confronted in Jackson, Miss., last Thursday.

Mr. Nixon will speak to a GOP rally Friday in Phoenix, and help open a World's Fair in Spokane, Wash., on Saturday. The Saturday event means that Mr. Nixon will be unable to make his usual appearance at the White House Correspondents' dinner, which is on the same night. White House officials said the Spokane event had been scheduled for several months.