

SHOWDOWN TODAY LIKELY IN DISPUTE OVER NIXON TAPES

Executive Session Scheduled
by Ervin Panel to Receive
Letter From President

HIS REFUSAL EXPECTED

Testimony by Strachan to
Resume After Committee
Gets White House Reply

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WASHINGTON, July 22—The showdown between the Senate Watergate committee and President Nixon over the committee's urgent request for tape recordings made in the President's office is expected to come tomorrow.

The committee is scheduled to meet in closed executive session at 9 A.M., just before Gordon C. Strachan resumes public testimony before the committee at 10 o'clock. The committee expects to receive a Presidential letter on the matter, which has been building in importance over the last several weeks.

Last week, a White House aide told The New York Times that Mr. Nixon would not give Senate investigators access to the tapes.

3 Key Advisers

Despite the stresses of the Watergate scandal, President Nixon is reported by insiders to continue to rely largely on the advice of three men—Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Ronald L. Ziegler and Henry A. Kissinger [Page 14.]

In another development, the Gallup Poll reported that three-fourths of the American people continue to believe the President was involved to some extent in the Watergate case, and

almost half still consider it a "very serious matter." Twenty-four per cent of those in the latest survey wanted Mr. Nixon impeached, up from 18 per cent in late June. [Page 15.]

The committee seeks not only the controversial tapes, but also a number of documents it believes may be related to the Watergate case.

The tapes and other documents may shed light on White House involvement or lack of it in planning the burglary of the Democratic party's national headquarters at the Watergate office building on June 17, 1972, and related events of political sabotage and espionage. The documents may also shed light on whether Mr. Nixon was involved in subsequent efforts to cover up the Watergate scandals.

Other Witnesses

Mr. Strachan, who was an aide to H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff, will be followed on the witness stand by John D. Ehrlichman, the President's former chief adviser for domestic affairs, Mr. Haldeman and Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to the President. It was considered unlikely that Mr. Ehrlichman would be called to the stand before Tuesday.

The committee may not get to Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Colson this week, but hopes to wind up this phase of its hearings by Aug. 3. A large number of other witnesses are scheduled to testify, but it is doubtful that the committee will be able to get all of them before the recess date.

There are many other potential witnesses in the wide-ranging investigation. They include L. Patrick Gray 3d, former acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst; Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen; Richard C. Helms, the former Central Intelligence

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Agency director; Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., Mr. Helms's former deputy, and Lieut. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, the present deputy C.I.A. director.

Also, Egil Krogh Jr. and David M. Young Jr., both members of the "plumbers" group, which was organized to stop news leaks at the White House; E. Howard Hunt Jr., who pleaded guilty in the Watergate burglary and conspiracy; William O. Bittman, Hunt's attorney; Paul L. O'Brien and Kenneth Wells Parkinson, attorney for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, and Lawrence M. Higby, another assistant to Mr. Haldeman.

Weekend at Camp David

The President spent the weekend at Camp David, Md., recuperating from an attack of viral pneumonia. He also met with aides to discuss the Watergate affair. Mr. Warren said the President was scheduled to be in his White House office tomorrow for an appointment at 10 A.M.

Committee sources said they

expected the Senators to vote to subpoena the tapes and documents if the White House did not release them voluntarily. Such a subpoena would precipitate a constitutional struggle over the right of a President to withhold information from Congress.

Earlier this month, Mr. Nixon had agreed to meet with the committee chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, to discuss access to White House documents.

Request Widened

But the President's illness delayed the meeting. While Mr. Nixon was in Bethesda Naval Hospital under treatment, Alexander P. Butterfield, a former White House aid, testified before the Senate Watergate committee that Mr. Nixon had secretly tape-recorded all conversations in the Oval Office of the White House and the Presidential office in the Executive Office Building since the spring of 1971.

The Senate then widened its request to include the tapes. As a consequence, the President's meeting with Senator Ervin, which the committee hoped would lead to a compromise, may now be abandoned, according to officials in the White House and on Capitol Hill.