

Question: Do They All Exist?

Ziegler Hedges on 42 Tapes

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said yesterday that as far as he knew no one has listened to the 42 taped conversations sought by the House Judiciary Committee.

"I'm certain there's been no tampering with any tapes," Ziegler said in reply to questions as to whether all the conversations sought by the committee were recorded on tape.

Ziegler said he did not know whether all 42 conversations

were recorded because he did not know where all of them took place. The President's Oval Office and his office in the Executive Office Building were equipped with recorders, but rooms in the residence were not.

Ziegler's uncertain answers raised questions as to whether some of the tapes existed, but Ziegler said reporters were asking questions he was not informed about and were putting him at a disadvantage.

After being pressed to provide answers, Ziegler promised to consult presidential

counsel James D. St. Clair and furnish a written answer.

When the written answer was provided, it also failed to clear up the questions raised.

"Our position on this matter has been referred to by the President and in other White House statements," the written reply said.

"In short, no decision has been made by the President with respect to this request, pending the committee's assessment of the extensive material now before it, and more specific and detailed refer-

ences to the need for any additional material.

"The counsel's office, as we have pointed out, is having ongoing private conversations with members of the Judiciary Committee. I am not prepared to discuss any aspect of this matter further at this time."

Ziegler declined to provide any information regarding the Watergate special prosecutor's subpoena for additional information from the White House except to say that St. Clair met on the subject yesterday with prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

In a meeting with reporters late Tuesday, White House counselor Bryce Harlow, who plans to resign within the next few weeks, said he still believed that at this time there is a "substantial" vote against impeachment in the House.

Harlow said he was confident that the Judiciary Committee wanted to move expeditiously on its impeachment inquiry. He predicted that the final House decision on impeachment will be made "by the end of May."

Some other White House officials have predicted that the impeachment process will be drawn out much longer and that the House may not vote on the matter before the November elections.

Harlow predicted that the White House and the Judiciary Committee would reach a

compromise on the committee's request for additional information after the committee defines more precisely what it wants.

On another issue, Ziegler said the President had not decided whether to make public his 1973 tax return, which he is scheduled to file by April 15.

But the press secretary said he had not seen "any great rush" by other public officials to make their returns public. He suggested that "key members of congressional committees" might make their returns public, a comment that seemed to apply, among others, to Chairman Wilbur D. Mills of the House Ways and Means Committee. Mills has been highly critical of the President's tax returns.

The President last year made public his tax returns for 1969 through 1972.