

Excerpts From Transcript of Ziegler's

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WASHINGTON, May 15—
Following are excerpts from a transcript of the regular White House press briefing given this morning by Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press secretary.

Question. Are Ehrlichman and Haldeman still on the payroll here, and if so why?

Answer. As we have explained to you before in the past days, Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Dean have been on the payroll in the course of this transition period. I believe that, if not today, within the next few days this transition payroll will be completed and they will no longer be on the payroll.

Q. During this transition period, last week specifically, when the judge in the Pentagon papers trial was looking for the records of the wire-tapped 17, did not John Ehrlichman tell Mr. Garment or someone at the White House that those records were in the White House?

A. Well, that is something I don't discuss in any way.

Q. I don't want you to discuss it. Is it true or isn't it true that he did?

A. I can't respond to that question.

Q. Why can't you, Ron?

A. Simply because I'm not prepared to do so. Mr. Ruckelshaus yesterday spelled out the investigation they undertook, spelled out the process which was followed and also made clear what the purpose of that particular activity was and I have nothing to add to it.

Link to Ellsberg Verdict

Q. The failure to find the stuff cost the Pentagon papers trial.

A. Gentlemen, I am not here to offer my point of view or to respond to questions such as you put to me, John. I can only respond to the questions on the basis of

the information that I have and the authority under which I can respond to question, and I cannot respond to that question.

Q. Ron, last Wednesday, you were reminded that the President had said last Aug. 29 that he had directed John Dean to make an investigation into the Watergate, and the investigation showed no one on the White House staff was involved. Then yesterday you were asked the same question. Last Wednesday you said the White House stood by the remarks. Yesterday you were asked if the President stood by his remarks—that he directed John Dean to make an investigation into Watergate—and you would not respond to that. Do you stand by those remarks of last Aug. 29?

A. There have been a number of follow-up questions on this subject and I have attempted to convey to you, which apparently we had not been able to do, the position that I am in, in responding to questions such as this, as we are dealing with individuals moving through the judicial process and also anticipating the Senate hearings.

Based on Data Given Him

What I attempted to convey and was attempting to convey, and perhaps it created a misunderstanding, was that the President did ask for an investigation and in August of 1972, when he made the statement, he was satisfied by what he was told, and therefore made the statement according to the information that was provided to him.

That is as clear as I can be. As I have said before in other briefings, what the White House said, what the President said, in relation to these matters, was based upon the information that was provided.

Now, in terms of your question—does the President stand by his Aug. 29 statement—I

can simply say that the President did ask for an investigation and was satisfied by what he was told; that the statements he made at the time and a time later were based upon the information available to him, were based on accurate information and therefore the statements were made.

Q. You do not say the President asked Dean for an investigation, and do you not say he was satisfied by what he was told by Dean. Isn't it a fact that he asked Ehrlichman to have Dean make the investigation and he was satisfied by what he was told by Mr. Ehrlichman?

A. Well, here again, I am not going to—having made that statement—get into a response to questions relating to individuals. However, I would remind you that references to the investigation, and references to this matter, are contained in the press conferences by the President and contained in briefing comments that we have made here from the White House, and that is the basis on which the basis on which the statements were made.

Who Told Him?

Q. Who told him, Ron? It is that simple.

Q. And who did he ask?

Q. Who told him and who did he ask?

A. Who told the President and who did he ask?

Q. Right.

A. This is something, Bob, that I just can't get into because of the situation that we face, but there was no question about the fact that the President and others of us who were here during the period of this time were under the understanding that, first of all, the President did ask for an investigation and was informed by individuals that his investigation was taking place and that the information he was provided was the fact of the matter.

Now, as to how this in-

Regular White House Press Briefing on Watergate

formation was provided to the President, it came in various ways and as I said, I am not prepared to get into a detailed discussion of that at this time.

A Fake Investigation?

Q. Is there any possibility this was a fake investigation?

A. I am not going to draw a conclusion such as that. Let me make a point, however, that there was no question at all that an investigation and an investigative process was taking place and there was a complete understanding that that was taking place, and statements were made based on the information provided and based upon the fact that there was satisfaction from what we are told.

Q. There apparently was nothing written from what you now say?

A. We never, at any time, as you recall, referred to a formal report or anything of that sort.

Q. Yes, you have us there, all right.

A. Which happens to be the case.

Dean Not Included

Q. The understanding apparently does not include Mr. Dean, to whom the President attributed the authorship of this report. Dean has said that he didn't know of any such report, but the President said on Aug. 29 that it was John Dean's report.

A. That is the very point that I am making. I am not going to get into a discussion about individuals and what individuals have said or what sources say individuals say. I simply will tell you that the President said in August that an investigation was undertaken and he referred to the fact that it was undertaken by Mr. Dean.

He was satisfied that that was the case, and he was satisfied that what he was told was based on such an investigation.

Now, that is all I will say.

Q. How does the President become satisfied that an investigation is under way, if he attributes the investigation to Mr. Dean? Does he talk to Mr. Dean; does he rely on Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman for Dean's report? You said the President was satisfied. How does the President normally become satisfied that an investigation is under way?

A. I am not going to be drawn into — Marty, as I said in response to Dick Valeriani's questions — further responses to this matter beyond what I have just given you.

Q. You just said to Courtney, Ron, that never at any time had you referred to a formal report. Are you saying to us in some indirection here that there was, in fact, not a written report.

A. I am only making that observation.

Timing of Judge's Request

Q. When did the White House become aware that Judge Byrne wanted, indeed, was demanding the copies of those wiretap laws?

A. I simply do not know.

Q. When did you become aware of it?

A. When it appeared in the paper.

Q. Does the White House think it was proper for Mr. Ehrlichman to have these files in his possession and that they were not in the offices of the director of the F.B.I.

A. Here again, Mr. Ruckelshaus discussed this matter yesterday and some questions in relation to the procedure, and stated reasons why in these matters, and I have nothing to add to it.

Q. You are the spokesman for the White House.

A. I understand that, and I've already said that as the White House spokesman I have nothing to add to that — to what he said. That is my answer.

Q. Wiretapping without a

court order is against the law. Is anyone going to be prosecuted for these wiretaps?

A. I think, if you take a look at Mr. Ruckelshaus's statement yesterday, he covered that area.

Q. Mr. Ruckelshaus said it was being done under the then-existing interpretation by Attorney General Mitchell, an interpretation which was unanimously rejected by the Supreme Court. If an attorney general tells someone, "it is all right to wiretap because I think the law let's on this subject.

I simply will tell you that Mr. Ruckelshaus, in his statement you do it," and the Supreme Court subsequently says the law doesn't let you do it, someone has broken the law. Is anyone going to be prosecuted?

A. Here again, I think Mr. Ruckelshaus addressed that question. I'm not prepared to do it and any questions on this matter should be addressed to Mr. Ruckelshaus or the appropriate podium. I am not it.

Q. Was General Walters summoned to the White House by Messrs. Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean, and for what purpose?

A. That falls in the area of those types of questions that I cannot respond to.

Q. Is it a correct reading of the record that even after Judge Byrne demanded this information from the F.B.I. that no one in the White House then stepped forward to tell Mr. Ruckelshaus, "Yes, we know there was not only one wiretap but there are 16 others." Is it a correct reading of the record to say that?

A. There is no way for me to provide to you a correct reading of the record and there is no way for me to be responsive to questions in this area and you should not draw inferences from my failure to respond to questions mentioned yesterday, referred to

the procedure followed, referred to how it began, referred to why it began and outlined details regarding the subject, and my response cannot add to that.

Q. Back to last August, did the President personally take part in the investigation then? Specifically, did he ask any of his aides or any other Federal employees, or campaign people, whether they were involved in the Watergate or whether they knew about it?

A. We have made the point many times, and so has the President, that extensive investigation was undertaken, and that over and over again, he inquired into how it was proceeding.

As the President pointed out in his speech in April and as we have pointed out on a number of occasions, the information that was provided in relation to this matter was based upon the information that was provided to us.

Q. You just said that many times the President asked about the investigation and how it was proceeding. Did he at any of those times ask the men whom you said was conducting the investigation?

A. There again, as I've said before, I am not going to be —

Stands on Answer

Q. That seems like a fair question, Ron.

A. Perhaps you judge it as a fair question, but my response in terms of the Aug. 29 statement and what we have said is I am going to rest on what I have stated previously and will not go beyond it.

I will simply say that the record of the President's press conference, and records of the White House briefings contain information in relation to this, and I have made a general statement on the subject and I am not going to be drawn into further questions on it.