

Nixon Offices and Phones
Were Bugged, Tapes Made

Recordings Could Prove or Disprove Dean's Testimony

Washington

President Nixon had listening devices in the White House that automatically would have tape-recorded his conversations with John W. Dean III and other key figures in the Watergate case, a former White House aide disclosed yesterday.

The White House confirmed that virtually all of Mr. Nixon's conversations—with anyone—since early 1971 had been recorded. But a presidential spokesman declined to say whether recordings of crucial discussions would be made available to the Watergate investigators.

The existence of the telephone and room listening devices was disclosed in brief but dramatic testimony by Alexander P. Butterfield, a surprise witness at the Senate Watergate hearings. Butterfield, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, was a deputy assistant to the President until March 14 of this year.

The recordings became the immediate focus of the central investigation by the Senate panel into the role Mr. Nixon may have played in the Watergate coverup.

Samuel Dash, the chief counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, told reporters that the basic issue was "what meetings did occur and what conversations took place."

"We now know there are records of those meetings," he said. "I don't have to draw the line underneath and add it up."

STORED

The tape recordings, which Butterfield said were stored in the Executive Office Building by the Secret Service, theoretically could prove or disprove the explosive — but undocumented — charge by Dean, the former counsel to the President, that Mr. Nixon was deeply involved in the Watergate coverup.

In a week - long ap-

peared early this year and that he was given a full briefing on the coverup by Dean on March 21.

All of these discussions were said to have taken place in presidential offices where, according to Butterfield, recording devices were automatically "triggered" by conversations.

REQUEST

The Senate committee scheduled an executive session today to consider a formal request to the White House for recordings of those and other meetings described by witnesses. Dash said there was "no question" that the recordings would be sought.

Deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren repeatedly declined to comment, however, when he was asked if the recordings would be turned over to the Senate committee.

Butterfield described the

listening devices dispassionately but reluctantly when he was brought before the committee under oath yesterday afternoon. He said that the recordings were meant to serve as part of a record "for posterity" of Mr. Nixon's administration and that they were designed ultimately to become a part of a Nixon library.

Butterfield testified that, following instructions he was told came from the President, he supervised the installation of automatic recording devices some time in 1970 — the White House later said that it was a year later — in the President's Oval Office and in a hideaway Mr. Nixon often uses in the Executive Office Building.

Butterfield said that another recording device, which could be turned on and off, was installed in the White House Cabinet Room.

TELEPHONES

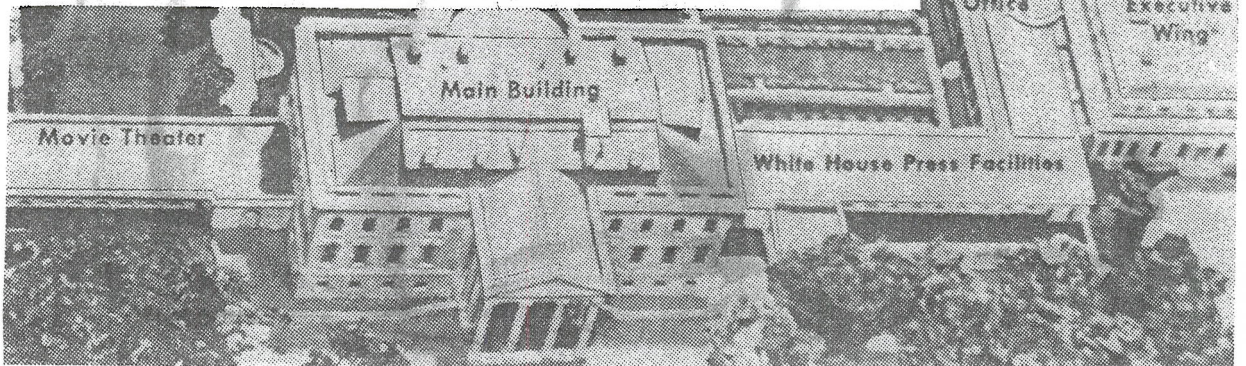
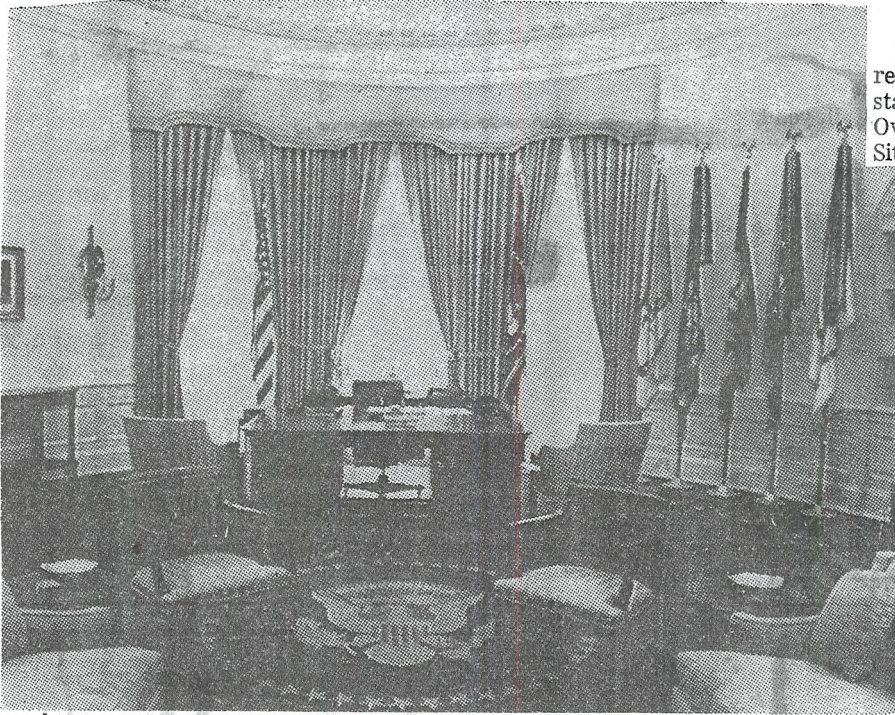
He told the senators that recording equipment was installed on telephones in the Oval Office and the Lincoln Sitting Room at the White

pearance at the hearings last month, Dean declared that the President was aware of

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the coverup last September, that he discussed payments of "silence money" and promises of executive clem-



The arrow points to the President's Oval Office (above) in west wing of the White House

House, in Mr. Nixon's private hideaway in the Executive Office Building, and in the President's personal lodge at Camp David in Maryland.

According to Butterfield, the existence of the listening devices was a closely guarded secret unknown to all but a handful of the President's assistants. He said he doubted that Dean, or even John D. Ehrlichman, who formerly was the President's senior domestic affairs adviser, were aware of the recorders.

In response to a question by Dash, Butterfield said there would be a complete recording of any of the President's private conferences with Dean; H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff; Ehrlichman, or Charles W. Colson, a former deputy counsel to the President.

Dean has testified that the three other men had been participants in the cover-up and that they had discussed various elements of it with the President.

CONVERSATIONS

"If one were, therefore, to reconstruct the conversations at any particular date," Dash asked, "what would be the best way to reconstruct these conversations, Mr. Butterfield, in the President's Oval Office?"

"Well, in the obvious manner, Mr. Dash," Butterfield answered. "To obtain the tape and play it."

The disclosure that such recordings were routinely made occurred almost accidentally as a result of a Senate committee staff interview with Butterfield on Friday. *13 for*

Butterfield was being questioned about his knowledge of events that occurred when he was a senior assistant to Haldeman. Butterfield was responsible for White House liaison with the Secret Service as well as the preparation of materials for the President library.

Dean had told the committee that he became suspicious that Mr. Nixon was

tape-recording a meeting with him in April because of "leading" questions by Mr. Nixon and a comment that the President made, in a lowered voice, at one point.

RECORDING

Donald G. Sanders, an assistant Republican counsel to the panel, asked Butterfield on Friday if the President could have made a recording.

Butterfield said that he was reluctant to disclose the existence of the devices because the revelation "could have a number of serious repercussions with regard to foreign governments." He did not elaborate, but presumably referred to the possibility that meetings between Mr. Nixon and visiting heads of state had been recorded without the knowledge of the visitors.

DOCUMENTS

Mr. Nixon has maintained repeatedly that he was unaware of the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex here on June 17, 1972, before it took place and that he is innocent of any involvement in the coverup. He never has referred, however, to any documents that would support his position.

Dash hinted broadly that the disclosure by Butterfield would place the President in the position where he might have to release the tapes to prevent any further diminution of his own credibility.

Refusal to provide the recordings would pose the risk, Dash told reporters, that the President's position would be "misinterpreted."

MEETINGS

Butterfield left little doubt in his testimony that the meetings in which the Senate panel is interested would have been recorded.

He said that there are four "locator" boxes in the White House, each measuring 10 inches by 10 inches, which show constantly the location of the President. A "locator light" indicating Mr. Nixon's presence, for example, in the Oval Office would automatically trigger the operation of the recording device there, he said, so that the instant the President or

anyone else spoke the voice would activate the recorder.

Asked if the President ever had asked that the system be temporarily disconnected, Butterfield answered:

"No, sir. As a matter of fact, the President seemed to be totally, really, oblivious — or certainly uninhibited by this fact."

He said that he had checked the equipment three times to make certain that it was operating properly.

AUTOMATIC

Butterfield said he lacked expert knowledge of the equipment installed by the Technical Services Division of the Secret Service. But he told Dash that he understood the telephone bugs operated automatically and that the only one that was occasionally disconnected was the device at Camp David.

He said it was not used when a foreign official was a guest in the President's cabin, as was Leonid I. Brezhnev, the secretary of the Communist party in the Soviet Union, when he visited the capital last month.

Senator Joseph Montoya (Dem.-N.M.) asked Butterfield if the tapes could have been destroyed or altered. He said that they "shouldn't be" because the Secret Service is "highly trustworthy" and is solely responsible for marking and storing the tapes.

MEETINGS

Among the recordings that are certain to be sought by the Senate committee are those pertinent to the following meetings:

- The Sept. 15, 1972, meeting in the Oval Office at which, Dean testified, the President complimented him for having "contained" the scope of a Federal Grand Jury investigation of the Watergate break-in and discussed, in the presence of Haldeman, efforts to limit an inquiry by the House Banking and Currency Committee.

- A meeting on Feb. 27, 1973, at which, according to Dean, the President said that Dean should report directly to him on Watergate because Haldeman and Ehrlichman were "principals in

the matter" and a meeting the next day at which Dean said that he told the President that he (Dean) was also part of the "obstruction of justice."

- A meeting on March 13, at which Dean said that he had warned the President that demands were being made for more "silence money" for the Watergate defendants and the President reputedly said that it would be "no problem" to raise \$1 million. Dean said that the President also referred, at this meeting, to his promise of executive clemency for E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the conspirators who pleaded guilty.

- The March 21 meeting at which Dean said that he had urged the President to make a full disclosure of the facts because Watergate was "a cancer growing on the presidency."

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