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# NIXON WIRED HIS PHONE, OFFICES TO RECORD ALL CONVERSATIONS; SENATORS WILL SEEK THE TAPES



Alexander P. Butterfield, former White House aide, told of taping conversations

## SURPRISE WITNESS

### Butterfield, Ex-Aide at White House, Tells of Listening Devices

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 16 — President Nixon had listening devices in the White House that would have automatically tape-recorded his conversations with John W. Dean 3d and other key figures in the Watergate case, a former White House aide disclosed today.

The White House confirmed late this afternoon that vir-

*Excerpts from testimony on Watergate are on Page 28.*

tually all of Mr. Nixon's conversations 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 listening devices was disclosed in brief but dramatic testimony by Alexander P. Butterfield, a surprise witness at the Senate Watergate hearings. Mr. Butterfield, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, was a deputy assistant to the President until April 14 this year.

#### Focus of Inquiry

The recordings became the immediate focus of the central investigation by the Senate panel into the role President Nixon may have played in the Watergate cover-up.

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

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

#### Testimony by Dean

In a week-long appearance at the hearings last month, Mr. Dean declared that the President was aware of the cover-up last September, that he discussed payments of "silence money" and promises of executive clemency to Watergate defendants early this year and that he was given a full briefing on the cover-up by Mr. Dean on March 21.

All these discussions were said to have taken place in Presidential offices where, according to Mr. Butterfield, recording devices were automatically "triggered" by conversation.

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

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, repeatedly declined to comment this afternoon, however, when he was asked if the recordings would be turned

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over to the investigating committee.

Mr. Butterfield described the listening devices dispassionately but reluctantly when he was brought before the committee under oath this 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 would ultimately have gone into a Nixon library.

Mr. Butterfield testified that, following instructions he was told came from the President, he supervised the installation of automatic recording devices sometime in 1970—the White House later said that it was a year later—in the President's Oval Office and a hideaway Mr. Nixon often uses in the Executive Office Building. He said that another recording device, which could be turned on and off, was installed in the White House Cabinet Room.

He told the Senators that recording equipment had been installed on telephones in the Oval Office and the Lincoln sitting room at the White House, in Mr. Nixon's private hideaway in the Executive Office Building, and in the President's personal lodge at Camp David, a Presidential retreat in nearby Maryland.

According to Mr. 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 that he doubted the Mr. Dean, or even John D. Ehrlichman, who formerly was the President's senior domestic affairs adviser, were aware of the recorders.

#### A Complete Recording

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

Mr. Dean 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.

"If one were, therefore, to reconstruct the conversations at any particular date," Mr. 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," Mr. Butterfield answered. "To obtain the tape and play it."

The disclosure that the recordings were routinely made occurred almost accidentally as a result of a Senate committee staff interview with Mr. Butterfield last Friday.

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

#### Dean Tells of Suspicion

Mr. Dean had told the committee that he became suspicious that President 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. Donald G. Sanders, an assistant Republican counsel to the panel, asked Mr. Butterfield on Friday if the President could have made a recording.

Mr. 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.

Mr. Butterfield also said, in an apologetic footnote to his brief appearance before the committee, that he hoped his testimony had not "given away something which the President planned to use at a latter date in support of his position."

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 was innocent of any involvement in the cover-up. He never has referred, however, to any documents that would support his position.



The New York Times

During the morning session yesterday, the three Republican members of the Senate Watergate committee held an impromptu conference. From left: Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Howard H. Baker Jr. and Edward J. Gurney.

Mr. Dash hinted broadly that the disclosure by Mr. 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.

#### Risk of Misinterpretation

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

Mr. Nixon refused nine days ago to make available to the Senate committee an assortment of documents that the Congressional investigators had

requested. In a letter to Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. of North Carolina, the Democratic chairman of the committee, the President said that he would have to refuse the request because of his constitutional obligation to maintain the separation between the executive and legislative branches of government. Last month, however, the President expressly waived the executive privilege and lawyer-client privilege doctrines insofar as they applied to the testimony by Mr. Dean.

Senator Ervin is scheduled to meet, at some point soon, with the President to discuss the issue of the documents. The meeting has been delayed by the President's illness, which hospitalized him last Thursday.

#### Ervin Quotes Nixon

In a prelude to the hearings today, Senator Ervin bolstered his position by quoting Mr. Nixon's attitude toward Con-

gressional investigations. Saying that he had "never found a finer statement" on the subject, Mr. Ervin quoted from the chapter titled "Politics with Honor" in Mr. Nixon's book, "Six Crises."

In the section of the book, Mr. Nixon said that the three "necessary and vital purposes" of Congressional inquiries were first described by President Wilson. He repeated President Wilson's analysis that the investigating panels should determine the need for new laws, serve as a "watchdog on the actions of the executive branch" and, "probably most important," keep the public informed of "great national and international issues."

Mr. Ervin said that he regarded the Watergate investigation as "crucial" because it dealt with allegations that individuals with great power "have impaired, if not destroyed," the integrity of the election process.

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

#### Four 'Locator' Boxes

He said that there had been four "locator" boxes in the White House, each measuring 10 inches by 10 inches, which showed 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, Mr. 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.

Mr. Butterfield said that he lacked expert knowledge of the equipment installed by the technical services division of the Secret Service. But he told Mr. Dash that he understood the telephone bugs operated automatically as well and that the only one that was occasionally disconnected was the device at Camp David.

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

Senator Joseph M. Montoya, Democrat of New Mexico, asked Mr. Butterfield if the tapes could have been destroyed or altered. He said that they "shouldn't be" because the Secret Service was "highly trustworthy" and was solely responsible for marking and storing the tapes.

Mr. Butterfield suggested—and J. Fred Buzhardt, the special Watergate counsel in the White House, flatly declared—that President Johnson had recorded conversations in a similar way. The Secret Service officially denied later today having operated a recording system for the late President.

In conversations with newsmen late today, Mr. Dash said that the disclosure meant that it would be possible to obtain the truth about the allegations made against the President and his former associates without having to seek Mr. Nixon's own testimony. The President said in the July 7 letter to Senator Erwin that he would not meet formally or informally with the committee.

Mr. Dash said that the request for various recordings would be drawn "as narrowly as possible" and that the committee did not want to "rum-mag around" in the tapes.

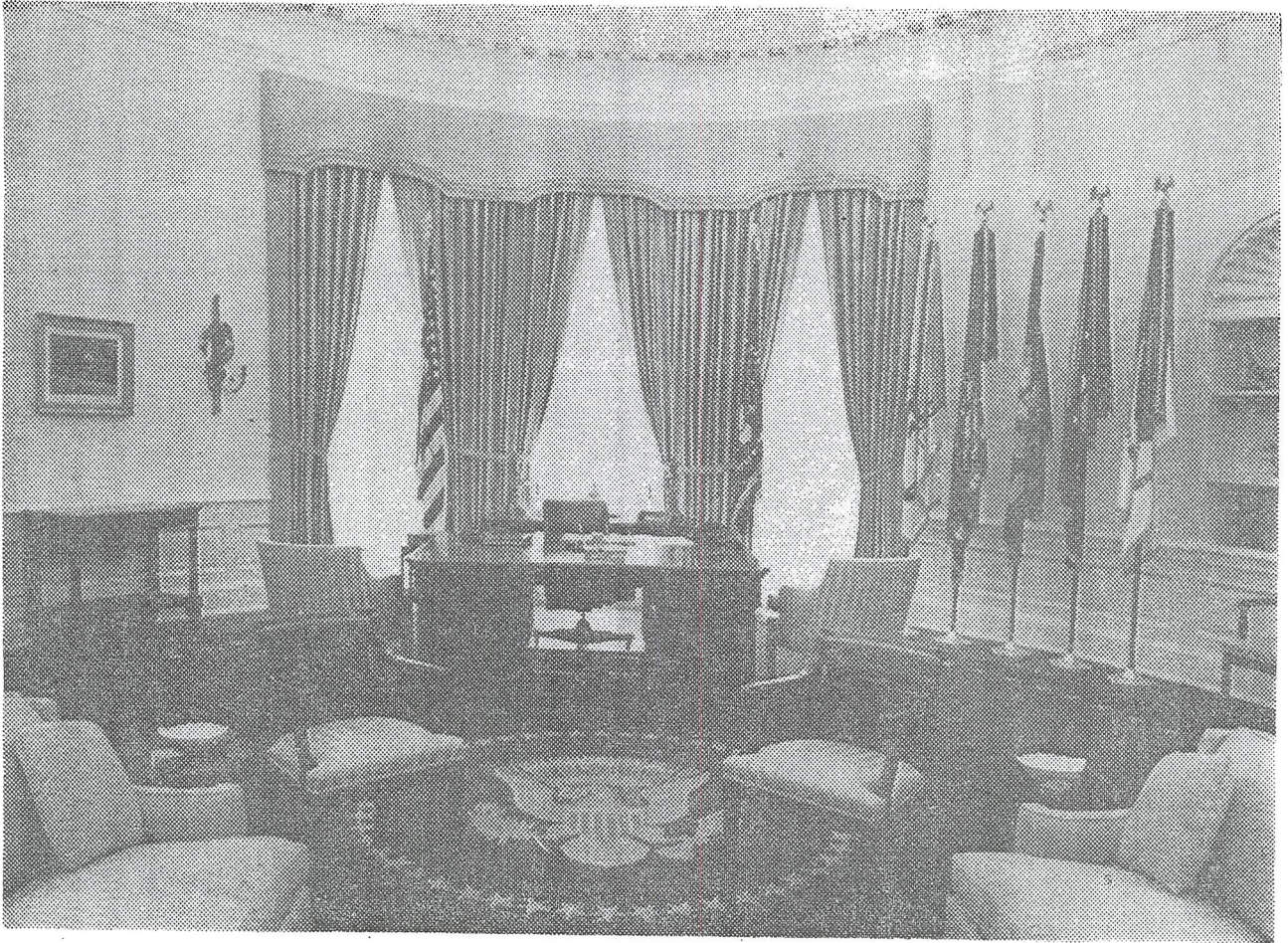
He said that the senate investigators would be "delighted" if the "ultimate resolution" of their inquiry was to determine that Mr. Nixon was innocent of any involvement in the Watergate scandal.

#### **Recordings to Be Sought**

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, Mr. 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 Mr. Haldeman, efforts to limit an inquiry by the House Banking and Currency Committee.

A meeting on Feb. 27, 1973, at which, according to Mr. Dean, the President said that Mr. Dean should report directly to him on Watergate because Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman were "principals in the matter" and a meeting the next day at which Mr. Dean said that he had told the President that he was also part of the "obstruction of justice."



United Press International

**The President's Oval Office. Alexander P. Butterfield, a former White House aide, testified yesterday that recording devices installed in the office were automatically triggered by conversation.**