

SFChronicle



New Probe in 'Nixon Tap' Case

Las Vegas

The Justice Department revealed yesterday it will investigate the possibility that telephone conversations between F. Donald Nixon and a former Howard Hughes aide were tapped.

The result of the investigation could establish conclusively whether President Nixon had ordered electronic surveillance of his brother, as widely reported last month.

However, it remains doubtful whether the subject matter of possibly tapped conversations between Donald Nixon and John H. Meier will be made available to Meier, the Hughes aide.

CLIENT

Meier's attorneys said they have asked for transcripts of any recorded conversations between their client and Nixon.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John R. Lusk said here the investigation merely is to determine whether Meier, under indictment for income tax evasion, was "subject to electronic surveillance."

"I can't agree to turn over transcripts without knowing what is in them," Lusk added.

Beside, Lusk said, he has no basis for either confirmation telephone was tapped.

Nixon and Meier, who was fired as scientific adviser to the Hughes Tool Co. in Nevada in 1969, are longtime friends.

Meier reportedly was dis-

missed by the Hughes organization because he disregarded White House orders to disassociate himself from the President's brother.

The President ordered his brother's phone tapped for the last several years because he feared embarrassment from the latter's financial dealings, according to reports which surfaced last month.

INCOME

When Meier, 39, was indicted here August 9 he was accused of failing to report \$270,000 in income for 1968 and 1969.

He also is being sued by the Hughes organization in Salt Lake City for allegedly conspiring to cheat it of \$9 million through the purchase of relatively unproductive mining claims at inflated prices.

Meier has claimed the indictment against him was "politically motivated" and based on evidence illegally obtained through taps on Donald Nixon's phone.

Meier's trial, scheduled to begin October 12, has been delayed until January 7 so the Justice Department can complete its investigation of the wiretap matter.

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