

# Nixon May Retract His Tape Offer

San Clemente

The White House acknowledged yesterday that President Nixon has changed his mind about making summaries of key Watergate-related tapes available to the public.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said Mr. Nixon's previously announced decision to Republican officeholders that summaries of the tapes would be made public is being "re-evaluated." He denied, however, that this is because senior White House staff have concluded that the summaries would be damaging to the President.

Instead, Warren laid heavy emphasis on events that have occurred since Mr. Nixon's promise to make the tape summaries public. Among these, Warren said, was the "indiscretion" committed by attorney William Dobrovir when he played portions of a tape in his custody at a Georgetown cocktail party and the demand for many additional tapes and documents by the Senate Watergate committee.

Warren's statement came in response to questions about a Washington Post story yesterday which said that Mr. Nixon would not

Back Page Col. 8

From Page 1

make public the promised tape summaries.

Even though Warren denied that the summaries would implicate Mr. Nixon in the Watergate coverup, he conceded that there are ambiguities in the tapes that "could lead to confusion in the minds of the American public and further distortion of the matter."

The White House response to the story about Mr. Nixon's changing view on the release of the tape summaries was coordinated between San Clemente and Washington, where departing presidential counselor Melvin R. Laird said senior White House aides are completely convinced of the President's innocence.

On several occasions during the past year, other high-ranking White House officials have made little secret of their annoyance at Laird's independence and habit of speaking his mind freely about the administration.

Yesterday, Warren pointedly associated the White House with Laird's remarks and made it clear Laird was speaking for the administration.

"There is not a senior counselor on the staff of the White House who has any doubt about the innocence of the President of the United States with regard to the coverup," Laird said. "Everyone has admiration and respect for the President and believes in his innocence . . . I have, talked to them all, I know their attitude."

The Washington Post story said that two presidential aides who had consistently maintained that Mr. Nixon was not involved in the conspiracy to cover up Watergate are no longer convinced. The story also quoted senior presidential aides as saying the White House tape recordings indicate that, at a minimum, Mr. Nixon had knowledge of the Watergate coverup several days before his announcement of it on March 21, 1973.

Both Laird and Warren said that long-delayed reports on the White House role in two other controversies — the ITT affair and the Milk Fund case — would be made public as promised by Mr. Nixon.

These reports apparently will be released in mid-January soon after Mr. Nixon has previewed them at a meeting with Republican congressional officials.

One of the major concerns now within the White House is that GOP congressmen and governors will conclude that Mr. Nixon is abandoning the public disclosure policy known as Operation Candor.

Beginning in November, the President promised in a series of meetings with GOP officeholders to face the accusations against him with a series of disclosures about Watergate, the ITT and Milk Fund affairs and his personal finances. So far, only the report on the presidential finances has been released.

Washington Post