

# White House Admits Tape-Summary Shift

## White House

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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Dec. 28—The White House acknowledged today that President Nixon had changed his mind about making summaries of key Watergate-related tapes available to the public.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said that Mr. Nixon's previously announced decision to Republican officeholders that summaries of the tapes would be made public was being "re-evaluated." He denied, however, that this was because senior White House staff members had 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" comment. See **PRESIDENT, A5, Col. 6**

### **PRESIDENT, From A1**

mitted 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 story in The Washington Post on Friday which said that Mr. Nixon would not 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 were 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 that senior White House aides were completely convinced of the President's innocence.

On several occasions during the past year, other high-rank-

ing White House officials have made little secret of their annoyance at Laird's independence and habit of speaking his mind freely about the administration.

Today, 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 cover-up," 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."

Warren said that this statement "accurately reflected the attitude of the senior staff in the White House."

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 were 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 cover-up 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 presidential finances has been forthcoming.

Mr. Nixon spent most of the morning with chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. and press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, his two principal assistants.

Haig and his secretary flew to San Clemente on Thursday evening to bring to 26 the known number of White House officials who have flown to the West coast by commercial airliner to join Mr. Nixon here. This total does not include at least 12 Secret Service agents who accompanied the President on his surprise flight from Washington to Los Angeles last Wednesday.

The last time that the President was in California, his aides followed a policy known as "Operation Openness" in which staff members were freely provided for interviews on policy questions. In line with the de-emphasis of "Operation Candor," however, aides have on the present trip remained secluded and inaccessible within the presidential compound at San Clemente.