

Cool Experts With

Washington

Filled with enthusiasm and armed with homemade charts, six experts on tape recordings yesterday presented their findings to Judge John J. Sirica in United States District Court here.

At stake was a central political issue—the President's credibility and whether the White House had tampered with a tape recording made in Mr. Nixon's offices on June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate scandals broke.

That tape contained an 18½-minute buzzing sound and the issue was whether

the buzzing happened by accident or design.

The panel did not touch the politics of it, however. They dealt, as scientists often do, only with the immediate technical problem in front of them. And, as often happens to scientists, their findings were rich in political impact.

Their unanimous finding was that the tape section in question was erased and the buzzing sound recorded onto it by a tape recorder that once sat on the desk of Mr. Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods.

Headed by Dr. Richard H. Bolt, of Lincoln, Mass., an

electronics consultant, the panel delivered its findings in the obscure language of electronics.

Bolt, 62, and Professor Thomas G. Stockham Jr., 40, of the computer science department of the University of Utah, said they found tiny "signatures" of the recording head and erasure head and by searching carefully, captured little bits of voices that convinced them that speech had been blotted off by the tape.

ecorder for the court, plunging his fingers down on the keys as his long gray hair bounced in reaction.

The other members of the

panel are Mark R. Weiss, a vice president at the federal scientific corporation's laboratories in Manhattan; James L. Flanagan, who spent 16 years with the Bell laboratories, in Murray Hill, N. J.; Franklin S. Cooper, president of Haskins Laboratories in New Haven, Conn., and John G. McKnight, of the Scully-Metrotech division of the Dictaphone Corp. of California.

Like professors caught up in a research project, they spread their charts before the court showing how tiny bits of voice had escaped or been only recorded over without erasing.

a Hot Potato

They brought in a green chalk board, lecturing the court on how recording tape can be "developed" like a photograph, on the structure of recording and erasure heads on a tape recorder, on a faulty bridge rectifier and on what they called "flutter" on recordings.

THEY SAT TOGETHER BELOW AND TO THE RIGHT OF Sirica's high bench, huddling often with one another as questions were asked, suggesting answers to each other and even, on occasion, volunteering an unexpected extra answer for the court.

Bolt, who is chairman of the board at Bolt, Beranek

and Newman, Inc., an electronics consulting firm in Cambridge, Mass., was the informal chairman of the group.

He said that they had first been called together the evening of Sunday, November 18, at the Executive Office building. They had been chosen by common agreement by both sides—the special Watergate prosecutor and the White House lawyers.

"We were briefed on the general nature of the program and wrote out a program of approach," Bolt said.

It was quickly approved and "I've done almost no-

thing else for two months," he said.

They were not allowed to listen to other portions of the tape and two federal marshalls watched them to see that they didn't do so.

Also watching were Richard Hauser, one of the White House lawyers, and two men from the special prosecutor's staff, Carl B. Feldbaum and James Boczar.

There were three full-scale meetings at Bolt's laboratory, at Weiss's and at the University of Utah.

Each man individually made his own tests, as well, Bolt said.

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