

Confusion Over New Tape Gap

Washington

The White House said yesterday that it is "at a loss" to explain an apparent discrepancy in the transcript of one of the recorded conversations turned over last week to the House Judiciary Committee, which is studying the possible impeachment of President Nixon.

The New York Times has reported that although the transcript noted that the meeting last year, between Mr. Nixon and several of his aides, lasted from 1:57 p.m. until 3:43 p.m., the last line of the transcripts included the comment that "it is 3:16."

After investigating, a White House spokesman conceded that "we do not

know at this time" the explanation for the missing 27 minutes.

"We're at a loss, but we're still trying to figure something out," he said.

Another White House official who studied the 27-minute discrepancy yesterday conjectured that "there very possibly could have been some error in the logs that were maintained of the President's meetings by the White House staff.

Both the House Judiciary Committee and the special Watergate prosecutor have asked the White House for such logs as an aid to their investigations.

The White House official emphasized that it is only his "conjecture" that the explanation for the discrepan-

cy may lie in an error in the written log of the meeting's duration, rather than in any possible excision in the transcript or the tape from which it was made.

But he pointed out that the House committee and Leon Jaworski, the special prosecutor, have possessed for several months the tape recordings of the meetings on March 22, 1973, and he speculated that if any sign of tampering with the recording has been found, "I would guess there would have been a hearing or something else."

The official added that his

suspicion that the meeting actually ended at 3:16 p.m. is consistent with a notation in a separate log of the President's telephone calls kept by the White House switchboard. That log says that Mr. Nixon called a "foreign leader" at 3:28 that same afternoon, the official said.

Although he has no way of knowing for certain, the official said, he believes that "that call would not have been placed in the presence of" the Nixon aides who attended the meeting in question.

New York Times