

President Said to Refuse Crucial Pre-Break-in Tape

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President Nixon has refused to turn over a tape of an April, 1972, meeting that may show whether he was aware of covert campaign spying plans shortly before the Watergate break-in, it was learned yesterday.

Staff attorneys for the House Judiciary Committee described the tape as a critical, missing piece of evidence when they outlined the first chapter in the Watergate story behind closed doors Thursday.

Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah) said the April, 1972,

discussion among the President, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former White House aide H.R. (Bob) Haldeman may have involved discussion of a "sophisticated" intelligence gathering operation to aid the Nixon re-election effort.

Eight White House tapes dealing with Watergate—including the March 21, 1973, discussion between the President and former counsel John W. Dean III about hush money—will be played for the House panel starting Tuesday.

Owens, a member of the Judiciary Committee, re-

ported that chief counsel John Doar and his Republican counterpart, Albert E. Jenner, both called attention to the tape and the White House refusal to supply it for the impeachment inquiry.

Jeb Stuart Magruder, who was deputy to Mitchell in the 1972 campaign organization, said Mitchell approved plans for wiretapping Democratic National Committee headquarters and other targets during a decision-making meeting on March 30, 1972.

Mitchell has acknowledged that the electronic
See **IMPEACH**, A17, Col. 1

IMPEACH, From A1

eavesdropping project was on a list of matters he discussed with Magruder on that day but Mitchell insists that he rejected the plan.

The President has declared that the public now has the "full story" of the Watergate bugging of Democratic headquarters and the White House cover-up of the real sponsors of the wiretap.

But Doar said the censored transcripts of taped conversations made public by President Nixon "definitely" did not provide all the evidence needed to assess the President's role in the scandal. The tape of the April, 1972, meeting was one of 75 additional tapes requested by the Judiciary Committee in mid-April.

A memo was prepared for Haldeman by his aide, Gordon W. Strachan, on the \$300,000 plan to gather intelligence on possible Democratic challengers to Nixon.

The memo apparently was written between the March 30 Mitchell-Magruder session and an April 4, 1972, meeting between Mitchell and Haldeman. Strachan testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee was summer that he destroyed

the memo at Haldeman's instructions after the break-in on June 17, 1972.

Haldeman denied that he was aware of any such plan in advance of the Watergate arrests, and also said he did not recall telling Strachan to "clean" his files of potentially incriminating memos.

The President has asserted time and again that he was not aware of plans to plant a bug in Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex. The disclosure that the security chief for his re-election committee and two former White House "plumbers" were involved in the break-in came as a shock to him, Mr. Nixon has said.

Each member of the Judiciary Committee was supplied Thursday with a thick, black "Notebook No. 1" on Watergate Committee last hiring of G. Gordon Liddy by the Committee for the Re-election of the President to the June 17, 1972, arrests of five rubber-gloved men in Democratic offices.

Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) said six or seven other volumes of factual materials would be supplied to the committee members. They also received an index to all the evidence now in the committee's hands.