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John A. McCahill, left, a White House lawyer, and Dr. Michael Hecker of Stanford, a White House tape consultant, talking to newsmen at Washington courthouse.

Sirica Hears Arguments By Lawyers Over Tapes

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By LESLEY OELSNER MAY 14 1974

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WASHINGTON, May 13— Lawyers for President Nixon and for the special Watergate prosecution argued behind locked doors at the Federal Courthouse today over the prosecution's latest demand for Watergate-related White House tape recordings.

After listening to both sides, and to lawyers for defendants in the Watergate cover-up case as well, Judge John J. Sirica took the matter under advisement.

Some of the parties in the case had suggested earlier that Judge Sirica might decide the case immediately, but the judge's law clerk, D. Todd Christofferson, told reporters later that a decision was unlikely this week.

Earlier in the day Judge Sirica held another long closed meeting to discuss the final report by the court-appointed panel of experts on the 18½-minute gap in a crucial White House tape recording.

The report, according to sources close to the matter, confirms the panel's already stated conclusion that the gap was caused by a number of separate manual erasures and provides a long technical explanation of this conclusion.

Release in 2 Weeks

Judge Sirica announced after the morning meeting that the report would be released as

soon as it was printed, in about two weeks.

The White House's private consultant on tapes, Dr. Michael Hecker of the Stanford Research Institute, presented his own report on the 18½-minute gap to Judge Sirica today, a report that is believed to agree with the panel's, at least on general conclusions. Dr. Hecker later met with four members of the panel, presumably to discuss and compare their findings.

According to Judge Sirica, the White House is free to release Dr. Hecker's report as soon as the panel's report is made public.

This afternoon's session, over the Watergate prosecution subpoena of tapes and records of 64 White House conversations, had a far more controversial air than this morning's, representing as it did a mounting confrontation between the prosecution and the President.

Tapes Reported Needed

The prosecution has demanded the tapes and records on the ground that they are necessary for the forthcoming trial of the cover-up case. Of the 64 conversations, all but one are between Mr. Nixon and four of his former top aides, the exception being a conversation between some of those aides in which the President apparently did not participate.

The four other participants are John W. Dean 3d, who is to be a prosecution witness at the trial, and three of the seven defendants in the case: Charles W. Colson, John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman.

The other defendants are John N. Mitchell, Robert C. Mardian, Kenneth W. Parkinson and Gordon Strachan.

President Nixon has asked that the subpoena be quashed, on the ground that the prosecution failed to demonstrate adequate need for the subpoenaed material. At one point last week, Mr. Nixon's chief defense counsel, James D.

St. Clair, indicated that the President might be willing to reverse himself and reach an "accommodation" with the prosecution.

That possibility quickly vanished, though, and today, after the court hearing, Mr. St. Clair reiterated the President's opposition to the subpoena.

"It's obvious we're resisting it," he said. "That's why we're here."