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Nixon Tapes

Custody Clarified

U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Richey yesterday amended his ruling that temporarily blocked the government from giving former President Nixon ownership and control over presidential papers and tapes from his administration.

The new order issued yesterday amounts to a clarification of one issued Monday, so that some of the materials can be used "for purposes of current government business" after notification of Mr. Nixon's attorneys and White House lawyers.

That exception was necessary, because, among other reasons, the National Security Council is currently using some materials that might have fallen under Judge Richey's first order, according to government attorneys.

Another exception was carved out for Watergate cover-up trial defendants or attorneys who have had access to the documents in the past for use in trial preparation.

Yesterday's amendment does not change the general thrust of Richey's Monday order temporarily blocking the controversial agreement in which the government agreed to give Mr. Nixon ownership and control of the materials.