

Kennedy Had Tapes On 'Sensitive' Talks

Special to The New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., July 17

—President Kennedy made apparently secret tape recordings of both telephone conversations and staff meetings in the White House, the director of the Kennedy Library said tonight.

The Kennedy tapes came to light against a background of controversy over disclosures in the Watergate hearings that President Nixon had secretly wired his office and telephones to record conversations, and charges and denials that President Johnson had done the same.

A search of the John F. Kennedy Library archives in nearby Waltham turned up 68 Dic-

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tablets of Presidential telephone conversations and 125 magnetic tapes of Presidential meetings, the library announced.

In a three-sentence statement, Dan H. Fenn Jr., director of the library, said, "The library's impression, after a cursory check, is that almost all of this material deals with highly sensitive foreign policy and national defense matters."

The statement said, "The Kennedy Library staff has not reviewed this material, nor has it been screened for public release by the screening committee established under the deed of gift turning the material over to the Federal Government."

The circumstances under which the tapes were made were not clear from the statement.

But yesterday, two high aides to President Kennedy said that they knew of no monitoring of conversations during the Kennedy Administration.

Powers Is Emphatic

"I cannot recall this ever being done," said David Powers, former appointments secretary to President Kennedy and curator of the John F. Kennedy Library.

"If it had been done, I would have known it. I was in the President's office every day," he added. He said then that no tapes had turned up in the archives.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., the historian and a Kennedy aide, said that it was "inconceivable" that Mr. Kennedy would ever have approved of such an "incredible" system as Mr. Nixon's.

In his statement, Mr. Fenn said that the Dictabelt recordings of the telephone conversations began about September, 1962, and the tapes of the Presidential meetings began in July, 1962.

The existence of Mr. Nixon's automatic listening devices was disclosed yesterday in brief but dramatic testimony at the Senate Watergate hearings by Alexander P. Butterfield, a former White House aide who now heads the Federal Aviation Administration.

The White House, while confirming that nearly all of President Nixon's meetings and telephone conversations had been secretly recorded since 1971, asserted that the system was similar to that employed during the Johnson Administration.

That charge was immediately challenged by the late President Johnson's aides, one of whom, Joseph A. Califano Jr., described it as a "damned, outrageous smear, a total smear on a dead President."

Embassies Not Concerned

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WASHINGTON, July 17

When the Shah of Iran, Premier Kakuei Tanaka of Japan and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of Australia visit President Nixon later this month, they will be the first visitors from overseas whose conversations with the President will be recorded with their foreknowledge.

The private comments from officials of a number of embassies in Washington today indicated that the White House taping procedure had caused little concern.

"I'm rather fed up with all the calls," said an officer at one Western European embassy. "I don't see what all the excitement is about. Of course, it is awkward for the President to have this disclosed now."

"Every statesman is aware," said a spokesman for a Communist mission, "that if conversations are not recorded as they happen, they will be recorded later from notes. Maybe they could have been more cautious."

Among the leaders who have visited Mr. Nixon since the spring of 1971, and whose conversations have presumably been taped, are the following:

- John M. Luch, Prime Minister of Ireland.
- King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.
- Josip Broz Tito, President of Yugoslavia.
- William McMahon, President of Australia.
- Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.
- Emilio Garrastazu Medici, President of Brazil.
- Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany.
- Eisaku Sato, Prime Minister of Japan.
- Nihat Erim, Prime Minister of Turkey.
- King Hussein, of Jordan.
- Luis Echeverria Alvarez, President of Mexico.
- Lee Kuan Yee, Prime Minister of Singapore.
- Gregorio Lopez Bravo de Castro, Foreign Minister of Spain.
- Giulio Andreotti, Prime Minister of Italy.
- Dr. Rainer Barzel, chairman of the Christian Democratic Union of West Germany.
- Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia.
- William R. Tolbert Jr., President of Liberia.
- Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.