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W Post

The Watergate Tapes: What Has Happened

Associated Press

Here, at a glance, are the latest developments involving the Watergate investigation and the White House tapes.

NIXON—The White House announced Saturday night the firing of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and the resignation of Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson. In addition, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that the Watergate Special Prosecution Force was being disbanded with its functions to be handled by the Justice Department. And, Ziegler said, Deputy Attorney General William D. Ruckelshaus was fired by President Nixon after Ruckelshaus refused President Nixon's order to discharge Cox. (Ruckelshaus said he resigned, which is confirmed by a Nixon letter to the solicitor general.) Solicitor General Robert H. Bork was named acting Attorney General.

RICHARDSON—Attorney General Richardson told President Nixon that he had given Cox a commitment that his work would not be interfered with and in the light of that commitment he could not carry out the President's order to fire Cox, and instead would resign.

COX—In a one-sentence statement after his firing, Cox said: "Whether ours shall continue to be a government of laws and not of men is now for Congress and ultimately the American people."

COMPROMISE—The moves by President Nixon came 24 hours after he announced a compromise on the Watergate tapes. Under that agreement summaries would be prepared of the Watergate-related material on the tapes, and Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) would be allowed to hear recordings to certify the information. Cox had declined to abide by the compromise.

ERVIN—Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), Senate Watergate committee chairman, said he expects under the compromise to receive verbatim transcripts of portions of the tapes, rather than summaries of the information. Ervin said he had been in touch with the White House and presidential counsel had advised him that his interpretation was identical with theirs.