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Nixon Plans Tape Delivery In 2 Weeks

By Richard Harwood
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President Nixon last night agreed to turn over to the House Judiciary Committee in about two weeks "additional" tape recordings bearing on the Watergate scandal and on the impeachment proceedings in Congress.

His decision was transmitted to the committee in a letter from White House special counsel James D. St. Clair.

It was in response to a demand issued by the committee on April 4 that the President state by yesterday whether he intended to turn over 41 presidential tapes and other materials that are presumed to have a bearing on the Watergate cover-up.

Whether Mr. Nixon's response last night would satisfy the committee is unclear. A committee spokesman declined to issue any statement.

The White House, however, is reported to believe that St. Clair's letter is "responsive" to the committee and meets the committee's demand that Mr. Nixon state his "intentions" with respect to the 41 tapes.

On that point, St. Clair wrote last night:

"... [Mr. Nixon] has directed me to advise you that a review of the materials in question is under way. We expect that the review can be completed by the end of the Easter recess [April 22], and that the additional materials furnished at that time will permit the committee to complete its inquiry promptly."

Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) acknowledged receipt of the St. Clair letter last night but had no comment on it.

The committee first asked for the 41 tapes on Feb. 25. The White House balked at this "blanket demand," which led to the April 4 letter from Committee counsel John Doar to St. Clair.

St. Clair indicated in his letter yesterday that he and Doar have made progress in reaching an agreement.

"... Your letter of April 4," St. Clair wrote, "goes a long way toward providing the additional specifications we felt were lacking in your original request for tapes and materials."

St. Clair gave no indication in his letter as to how

many tapes and other materials are now being sought by the committee or as to how much material will be turned over after the Easter recess.

St. Clair raised again the issue of whether he will be able to participate in the committee's impeachment proceedings against the President. "I hope," he wrote, "that the committee will decide on my role ... before the upcoming recess."

Democrats on the committee caucused yesterday and reportedly were amenable to letting St. Clair attend closed sessions at which evidence would be presented. But the committee said no vote on St.

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Clair's role was taken and the matter would have to be resolved by the full committee.

The committee may meet today or tomorrow to consider a response to St. Clair's letter.

The President's lawyer said in his letter that, "The President wishes me to reiterate to

you and the committee his continuing desire to cooperate so that the pending inquiry can be brought to a prompt conclusion."

Whether the committee will move this week to subpoena the presidential materials it wants, or whether it will bide its time until after the Easter recess, is unknown. Neither

Rodino nor a spokesman for the committee was available last night to clear up that point.

One committee member, Democrat Jerome Waldie of California, dismissed the St. Clair letter as a refusal by the President to cooperate. "We should no longer tolerate his contemptuous attitude toward those seeking the truth of his conduct of his office," Waldie said. "We must now subpoena all the evidence we require."

Waldie has not always spoken for the committee majority.

The tentative timetable calls for the committee to begin hearing impeachment evidence on May 7, possibly with St. Clair present.

Among the unfinished tasks facing the committee is the separation of impeachable and non-impeachable offenses. It is expected that it will eliminate from the list of impeachable offenses such matters as

Mr. Nixon's dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity and the impoundment of federal funds. It would then focus on Mr. Nixon's role in the Watergate affair, his personal finances, his role in government spying operations and improper fund-raising techniques, as well as other issues.

Doar has estimated that the presentation of evidence for the committee can be completed in about seven days. Then the committee would proceed with its own deliberations and the preparation of a resolution either recommending or disapproving impeachment.

The committee is composed of 21 Democrats and 17 Republicans.

Only one of the Republicans, Robert McClory of Illinois, had any comment last night on the latest White House communication. "They haven't replied forthrightly to our request," he said.