

WORDS OF NIXON CHANGED BY AIDES

Transcripts of News Talks
Are Altered for 'Clarity'

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WASHINGTON, June 10—The official transcript of President Nixon's latest news conference quotes Mr. Nixon as having asserted that United States forces in Cambodia had captured "rockets by the thousands and small arms ammunition by the millions."

But that is not what the President said at the conference May 8.

The White House, in what officials said later was an attempt to assure "clarity" in the historic record of the President's statements, changed the transcript, inserting the word "ammunition."

A tape recording of the news conference confirms that Mr. Nixon said that the Cambodian operation had netted "rockets by the thousands and small arms by the millions."

The change is substantive in view of the Administration's effort to justify the military thrust into Cambodia in terms of large amounts of captured equipment and the time that the operation may buy for training of South Vietnamese forces to assume the American combat role.

Less substantive, but curious, are other changes that are apparent in a comparison of the official White House transcripts with tape recorded versions of all 10 of Mr. Nixon's Presidential news conferences.

The comparison shows that the White House regularly corrects mistakes made by the President, cleans up his syntax, drops connecting words that may be superfluous and even spells out every contraction used by Mr. Nixon.

Previous White House Administrations have changed the official transcripts, too. Members of Congress regularly change the wording of what they have said before their remarks are quoted in The Congressional

Record and insert in The Record remarks they have not uttered at all.

Issue Is Defined

At issue is whether the official Presidential transcripts—which are printed in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents published each Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Record Service—should be a historic record of what the President said or an account of what he may have meant to say.

"I totally disagree that the transcript is for any other purpose than the purpose of clarity and to be factual," said Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, whose staff prepares the transcripts.

"For history and for the record," he added, "it should show when people are referring back to it that we did not capture millions of small arms."

Mr. Ziegler conceded that it would have been appropriate to set off the word "ammunition" with brackets, to indicate that Mr. Nixon had it in mind but did not say it.

But he dismissed as "nit-picking, foolish and unacceptable to me as criticism" inquiries about changes in the transcripts such as these:

¶When Mr. Nixon stated on May 8 that "all Americans of all kinds, including advisers, will be out of Vietnam by the end of June," the White House corrected the obvious error by inserting the word "Cambodia" in place of "Vietnam."

¶On March 21, Mr. Nixon referred to Thailand's "2,000-mile border with Laos." The White House changed it to read "1,000-mile border," which is correct.

¶At a news conference on Jan. 30, the President said that he was not concerned about

what Judge G. Harrold Carswell, an unsuccessful Supreme Court nominee, said in a segregationist speech "24 years ago." The speech was given in 1948. The White House corrected the transcript to read "2 years ago."

¶Last Sept. 26, when Mr. Nixon referred to Senator Charles Goodell, Republican of New York, as "Senator Goodwell, er, Senator Goodell," the transcript omitted the error.

¶Three times in a Presidential news conference on April 18, 1969, Mr. Nixon used the words "South Korea" or "South Korean" in reply to a question related to South Vietnam. He caught his error and said, "I'm sorry I mean South Vietnamese forces — it's natural that you transplant these two words, I find in discussing these two subjects." Neither the mistakes nor the President's explanation appeared in the official transcript.

¶"Now as far as meeting with the South Vietnamese leaders are concerned," said Mr. Nixon on Feb. 7, 1969. White House grammarians changed it to "is concerned."

Following each Presidential news conference, a private company of court reporters, Alderson Reporting Company, Inc., issues an unofficial transcript, for which news media covering the White House pay a fee.

The official transcript is based on the unofficial transcript, although the White House has available recordings of the President's news conferences.

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