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Editing tapes? It's easy to do

Knight News Service

There will be virtually no way to tell if the White House tapes have been edited to add or remove material, one of the nation's top recording experts says.

"There are a lot of ways tape-editing can be done and it's not a very difficult process," said Kayvan Mokhtarian, technical director of the industry's International Tape Association.

New editing techniques, he said yesterday, would allow the insertion or deletion of entire sentences, words or even syllables.

"You can skip five sentences, five words, or insert the same amount," Mokhtarian said. "You can do a lot."

Obviously, Mokhtarian wasn't speaking specifically of the White House tapes — but he said the same editing techniques can be used on any tape recording on earth.

"Tape-editing is a daily task that is being performed by many hundreds of technicians across the country," he said. "Almost any recording you buy in the marketplace has been edited, including music. In fact, editing is an integral part of any recording sold today."

Mokhtarian said it's not even necessary to touch the original tape or cut it at any point either in its form or its edited form.

A division of Atlantic Records in New York City recently used similar techniques to produce a phony "novelty recording" of President Nixon accepting the blame for planning the entire Watergate affair.

But Mokhtarian said even more sophisticated ways of editing are now available — and ultra-cautious work could produce a duplicate tape that could not be distinguished from an unedited original.

The better the editing, the more difficult it would be to detect — and there seems to be no limit on the quality of tape-editing today, he said.

In the last analysis, he explained, the editing could be so perfect—even though it drastically changed what was on the original tape—that it could take months of work by the nation's top electronics technicians to come up with even a suspicion that the tape had been edited.