

# Just what is on those Watergate tapes?

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WASHINGTON — What is so important in President Nixon's Watergate tapes that made Archibald Cox fight so hard to get them that he wound up being fired?

Apparently no one except the President and his former top aides, whose voices are recorded on them, really knows. Asked recently if the tapes were vital for the grand jury, Cox shrugged and replied: "It's vital that we find out if they're vital."

The tapes cover nine conversations Nixon had with aides. Here, from a summary Cox gave U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica on Aug. 13, is what they contain:

- A meeting on June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate arrests, between Nixon and his two top aides, John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman. Contended Cox: "The inference that they reported on Watergate and may well have received instructions, is almost irresistible."

- A telephone conversation on June 20, 1972, between Nixon and John N. Mitchell, his former attorney general and then campaign manager, which Cox said will show how much Mitchell reported about the bugging.

- A meeting on June 30, 1972, between Nixon, Haldeman and Mitchell the day before Mitchell quit as campaign chief. Cox said "it strains credulity to suppose" that Watergate and its impact on the campaign were not discussed.

- A meeting on Sept. 15, 1972, the day indictments of the Watergate seven came down, between Nixon, Haldeman and then White House counsel John W. Dean III. Dean testified he believed from that conversation that Nixon was aware of the coverup. Cox said that if this is proved, "it will tend to establish that a conspiracy to obstruct justice reached the highest level of government."

- A meeting on March 13,

1973 among Nixon, Dean and Haldeman in which Dean testified Nixon said he had approved executive clemency for one of the convicted conspirators and that there would be no problem in raising \$1 million to buy the defendants' silence.

- Two meetings on March 21, 1973. The first involved Dean, Haldeman and Nixon. Dean testified he told Nixon there was a "cancer growing on the presidency" and told him the full story of the coverup. The second involved those three as well as Ehrlichman and Presidential Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.

- A meeting on March 22, 1973 among Nixon, Dean, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell that dealt solely with Watergate.

- A meeting on April 15, 1973 between Nixon and Dean at which Dean confessed he had begun cooperating with authorities and Nixon allegedly said he had been "joking" about the \$1 million and had been "foolish" to discuss clemency.