

# White House Listening Devices

By Thomas O'Toole

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The array of listening devices built into the White House and the President's private office in the Executive Office Building is apparently unlike anything anywhere in the federal government.

"I know of no such listening system anywhere else in Washington," said one source close to the intelligence community. "Not in the Central Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon or any place else where sensitive conversations might take place."

The way former White House aide Alexander But-

terfield described the listening devices to the Senate Watergate committee they recorded President Nixon's private conversations in his Oval Office, his smaller office in the Executive Office Building and even the telephone calls he took in the Lincoln Sitting Room in his third-floor living quarters.

Butterfield also said that listening devices were implanted in the telephone in President Nixon's private cabin at his Camp David retreat and in the Cabinet Room in the White House where all Cabinet meetings are held. Butterfield said that low conversations and even whispers were recorded everywhere but in the Cabinet Room, where the size of the room and the number of people present presumably made listening more difficult.

"It would be hard for listening devices to distinguish between voices at a Cabinet meeting, where more than one person might be talking at one," an intelligence source said. "The size of the room might also limit listening devices to wall fixtures, which would make it that much harder to pick up all the voices."

Butterfield testified that the Cabinet listening device was activated manually, by a button on a phone in Butterfield's office. (Butterfield was an aide to presidential assistant H. R. Haldeman.)

Butterfield testified that the listening devices in the President's Oval Office and his smaller office in the Executive Office Building were connected to locator boxes in the White House that showed whether the President was occupying those offices. The listening devices were primed to record any conversation the moment the President or an office visitor began to speak.

"When the President moves from his Oval Office Building office," Butterfield said, "the little light (that locates the President and activates the listening device) moves from the Oval office to the EOB office."

"The installation was installed in such a way," Butterfield went on, "that when the light was on 'Oval Office' the taping device was at least triggered. It was not operating, but it was triggered — it was spring-loaded, if you will, then it was voice-actuated. In the EOB office, there was the same arrangement, and the taping picked up all conversations or all noise in those two offices when the light was at those positions."

Butterfield said the tapes of the presidential conversations are in storage in the Executive Office Building, just across a closed-off street from the White House. He said the tapes have not been transcribed.

He said he listened to

some of the tapes to make sure the equipment was working. He did not mention whether any of the tapes had been edited, though erasing of any of the voices on the tapes would be an easy enough thing to do.

Butterfield's disclosure of the elaborate White House listening system points up the dizzy heights that have been reached by the technology of electronics, which has long since graduated from the bugging devices hidden inside fake olives at the bottoms of martini glasses.

"Almost everybody in the business today uses the telephone as an all-purpose bugging unit," one source said. "It's easily hidden as a bugging device, for the simple reason that nobody suspects it."

One man in the business of "counter-surveillance" told of a device he called a "harmonica bug," which when placed inside a phone can be activated by a silent signal from anywhere in the world.

"It can be activated by calling it from a pay phone halfway around the globe," this source said. "The device is no bigger than a quarter and acts itself like a tiny phone within the phone, except that it doesn't ring to alert anybody that something is up."

Another device called a "hook switch bypass" can be concealed inside a phone

## U.S. Congressmen End Visit to China

SHANGHAI, July 16, (UPI)—The American congressional delegation which has been visiting China left for home today after a two-week tour.

"There can be no doubt that this trip has been a tremendous success," said Sen. Warren E. Magnuson (D-Wash.) Leader of the delegation of four senators and four representatives. "We are determined that our relations with the People's Republic of China should be improved and expanded as rapidly as possible."

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that can be switched on and off to either record face-to-face conversations or telephone conversations. These devices can also be turned off if somebody with counter-surveillance equipment is searching for them.

"You can even pipe music into the bugging device at such a low noise level that it can only be detected by a counter-surveillance device," a source said. "It throws the counter-surveillance device off completely."

Bugging the human voice can be done without the help of inside telephones. Laser beams can be directed at office windows, where they reflect back to the "beamer" carrying back the smallest vibrations in the window glass triggered by conversations behind the glass.

There are physical limits to bugging, one of which is the drowning out of one voice by the talking of others. Buggers might be able to bug the golfers on a golf course, but would find it almost impossible to bug any one person in a crowded theater.

There are two sure ways of beating the buggers. One is to turn a radio up to a very loud volume. An even better way is to turn on a shower and direct the shower water against a shower curtain.

"It drowns out everything," one source said.



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Alexander Butterfield, former presidential aide, explains bugging at White House.