

# Report of Nixon's Tape Strategy

## New York

President Nixon hopes to delay a Supreme Court ruling on the Watergate tapes until he has rebuilt enough public support to be able to defy anything but a unanimous or near-unanimous decision on the case, Newsweek magazine said yesterday.

Mr. Nixon announced last week that he would appeal a decision by U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica ordering him to produce certain of the Watergate tapes for inspection by the judge.

Newsweek said it had learned that the appeal "may be little more than the opening feint in a protracted strategy of delay designed to prevent a final decision in the Supreme Court until the President feels he has got his shattered majority back together again."

At that point, the magazine said, Mr. Nixon will defy "anything short of a unanimous or near-unanimous . . . ruling" and even will be ready "to purge both Attorney General Elliot Richardson and special prosecutor Archibald Cox in the process."

Newsweek said Mr. Nixon will spend the time until the Supreme Court ruling "rebuilding his public support.

"By then, the thinking goes, he would argue that any Supreme Court ruling closer than 8-1 or 7-2 in favor of Cox (who brought the suit seeking the tapes) was not the 'definitive decision' he had promised to obey; given enough public exhaustion with Watergate, he might even get away with it."

Cox and Richardson are considered expendable, Newsweek said. "The White House is no longer quite so tremulous as it once was at the reaction that would surely flow if the two men whom the President himself brought in to clear up the Watergate mess should suddenly depart with their mission unaccomplished," the magazine said.

Newsweek quoted one source as saying: "Cox couldn't have been dumped a month ago and if he quit now or was fired and if Richardson quit in protest, it would be tough to handle. But it will be less tough further down the line."

*Associated Press*