

TAPES DISCUSSED WITH RICHARDSON

Attorney General Consults
White House Lawyers

By LINDA CHARLTON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18 — President Nixon's attorneys have met with Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson to discuss the court battles over the Watergate tapes, the White House disclosed today.

Mr. Richardson refused at a news conference to comment on either his reported meetings with White House lawyers or on similar reported consultations with Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor, who is seeking the right to listen to the tapes of conversations in Mr. Nixon's Oval Office.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, disclosed the meetings involving Justice Department personnel and the White House lawyers in response to a question. He refused, however, to elaborate on Mr. Richardson's role or to give details of the meetings.

Tomorrow is the deadline for a White House decision on whether to appeal the decision last week by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that Mr. Nixon must turn over the tapes to Federal District Judge John J. Sirica to decide whether they may be heard by Mr. Cox. The prosecutor has sought the right to listen to them in hope of determining who has been telling the truth.

Constitutional Issue

Mr. Nixon has argued through his attorneys that the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers prevents him, as President, from relinquishing the tapes, which contain conversations believed to relate to the Watergate investigation. An appeal, which would set the scene for a historic Supreme Court confrontation, is believed almost certain.

Two court rulings that deal tangentially with the tapes dispute were handed down this week.

Yesterday Judge Sirica dismissed, on the ground that his court lacked jurisdiction, the Senate Watergate committee's suit to obtain the tapes.

In New York City today, Federal District Judge Lee P. Gagliardi, indicated that John W. Dean 3d, the former White House counsel, could be barred from testifying against former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans unless the prosecutors provided a White House tape or demonstrated that no relevant tape existed. The two former Cabin-

et members are charged with obstructing a Federal investigation of the fugitive financier Robert L. Vesco in return for his \$200,000 donation to Mr. Nixon's campaign last year.

In another development, Egil Krough Jr., who formerly heads the White House group assigned to stop leaks of information, pleaded not guilty today to charges of lying to the Watergate grand jury. The two-count Federal indictment, handed up last week, alleges that Mr. Krough lied when he denied any knowledge of the travels of E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy to Los Angeles to plan the burglary of the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding. He is the former psychiatrist of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, who made public the secret Pentagon papers on the history of the Vietnam war.

'Conflict of Innocent'

Hunt and Liddy, both members of Mr. Krough's group, known as the "plumbers," are now in prison for their roles in the Republicans' break-in at the Democrats' headquarters in the Watergate complex there.

Mr. Krough, who is also under indictment in California on burglary charges stemming from the Fielding break-in, said that he was "confident of my innocence."

His attorney, Stephen Shulman, indicated that Mr. Krough's defense would be based on the argument that he was "part of the totality of the actions of the group organized in the White House on a matter of highest national security."

Also made public today was a letter from Mr. Cox, the special prosecutor, to Representative Bertram L. Podell, Democrat of Brooklyn, concerning a decision of the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department "not to investigate the pricing practices of the Precision Valve Corporation." The corporation is owned by Robert H. Abplanalp, a close friend of Mr. Nixon and a contributor to his political campaigns.

Impropriety Is Denied

Mr. Cox, in reply to any inquiry Mr. Podell made July 16, wrote, "We have conducted a thorough investigation of this matter, including review of the division's files, and interviews conducted by my staff and by the F.B.I. No evidence of any improper conduct has been found."

Mr. Podell charged July 8 that a recommended investigation of the pricing practices of Mr. Abplanalp's company had been quashed because of outside pressure. This was denied by the department.

Mr. Abplanalp, through a spokesman, said "there was nothing to turn up" and charged that the allegations by Mr. Podell were "a 'cheap shot' by a Congressman who created a trumped-up charge on the eve of his indictment for an alleged violation of Federal laws."