

FULL TEXT OF NIXON'S STATEMENT

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Here is the text of the statement by President Nixon Friday night on the Watergate tape recordings:

For a number of months, there has been a strain imposed on the American people by the aftermath of Watergate, and the inquiries into and court suits arising out of that incident. Increasing apprehension over the possibility of a constitutional confrontation in the tapes cases has become especially damaging.

Our government, like our nation, must remain strong and effective. What matters most, in this critical hour, is our ability to act — and to act in a way that enables us to control events, not to be paralyzed and overwhelmed by them. At home, the Watergate issue has taken on overtones of a partisan political contest. Concurrently, there are those in the international community who may be tempted by our Watergate-related difficulties at home to misread America's unity and resolve in meeting the challenges we confront abroad.

I have concluded that it is necessary to take decisive actions that will avoid any possibility of a constitutional crisis and that will lay the groundwork upon which we can assure unity of purpose at home and end the temptation abroad to test our resolve.

It is with this awareness that I have considered the decision of the Court of Ap-

peals for the District of Columbia. I am confident that the dissenting opinions, which are in accord with what until now has always been regarded as the law, would be sustained upon review by the Supreme Court. I have concluded, however, that it is not in the national interest to leave this matter unresolved for the period that might be required for a review by the highest court.

Throughout this week, the attorney general, Elliot Richardson, at my instance has been holding discussions with Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, looking to the possibility of a compromise that would avoid the necessity of Supreme Court review. With the greatest reluctance, I have concluded that in this one instance I must permit a breach in the confidentiality that is so necessary to the conduct of the presidency. Accordingly, the Attorney General made what he regarded as a reasonable proposal for compromise, and one that goes beyond what any president in history has offered it was a proposal that would comply with the spirit of the decision of the Court of Appeals. It would have allowed justice to proceed undiverted, while maintaining the principle of an independent executive branch. It would have given the special prosecutor the information he claims he needs for use in the grand jury. It would also have resolved any lingering thought that the President himself might have been involved in a Watergate cover-up.

The proposal was that, as quickly as the materials could be prepared, there would be submitted to Judge Sirica, through a statement prepared by me personally from the subpoenaed tapes, a full disclosure of everything contained in those tapes that

has any bearing on Watergate. The authenticity of this summary would be assured by giving unlimited access to the tapes to a very distinguished man, highly respected by all elements in American life for his integrity, his fairness, and his patriotism,

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so that that man could satisfy himself that the statement prepared by me did indeed include fairly and accurately anything on the tapes that might be regarded as related to Watergate. In return, so that the constitutional tensions of Water-

gate would be no further attempt by the special prosecutor to subpoena still more tapes or other Presidential papers of a similar nature.

I am pleased to be able to say that Chairman Sam Ervin and Vice Chairman

Howard Baker of the Senate Select Committee have agreed to this procedure and that at their request, and mine, Senator John Stennis has consented to listen to every requested tape and verify that the statement I am preparing is full and accurate. Some may ask why, if I am willing to let Senator Stennis hear the tapes for this purpose, I am not willing merely to submit them to the court for inspection in private. I do so out of no lack of respect for Judge Sirica, in whose discretion and integrity I have the utmost confidence, but because to allow the tapes to be heard by one judge would create a precedent that would be available to 400 district judges.

Further, it would create a precedent that presidents are required to submit to judicial demands that purport to override presidential determinations on requirements for confidentiality.

To my regret, the special prosecutor rejected this proposal. Nevertheless, it is my judgment that in the present circumstances and existing international environment, it is in the overriding national interest that a constitutional confrontation on this issue be avoided. I have, therefore, instructed White House counsel not to seek Supreme Court review from the decision of the Court of Appeals. At the same time, I will voluntarily make available to Judge Sirica — and also to the Senate Select Committee — a statement of the Watergate-related portions of the

tapes, prepared and authenticated in the fashion I have described.

I want to repeat that I have taken this step with the great reluctance, only to bring the issue of Watergate tapes to an end and to assure our full attention to more pressing business affecting the very security of the nation. Accordingly, though I have not wished to intrude upon the independence of the special prosecutor, I have felt it necessary to direct him, as an employee of the executive branch, to make no further attempts by judicial process to obtain tapes, notes, or memoranda of presidential conversations. I believe that with the statement that will be provided to the court, any legitimate need of the special prosecutor is fully satisfied and that he can proceed to obtain indictments against those who may have committed any crimes. And I believe that by these actions I have taken today America will be spared the anguish of further indecision and litigation about tapes.

Our constitutional history reflects not only the language and inferences of that great document, but also the choices of clash and accommodation made by responsible leaders at critical moments. Under the Constitution it is the duty of the president to see that the laws of the nation are faithfully executed. My actions today are in accordance with that duty, and in that spirit of accommodation.
