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**Sirica to Consider
 Issue of Privilege
 Before Tape Audit**

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 30—The first official steps toward moving the Watergate tape recordings out of the White House vaults toward the grand jury were taken in Federal District Court today, and it looked like a long, slow journey.

Judge John J. Sirica met for an hour and a half in his chambers this morning with representatives of the White House and the special Watergate prosecution force to work out procedures for his examination of the nine White House tapes that President Nixon agreed to surrender a week ago.

When the closed conference was over, the judge issued a brief statement that failed to clarify the question of what access assistants of the dismissed special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, would have to the hitherto secret records as part of the judicial screening process.

Judge Sirica said that before he listened to the tapes he would "hear argument in closed session on the various claims of privilege" made by the President to keep portions of the recorded conversations from go-

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ing to the Watergate grand jury.

This clearly implied that lawyers for the special prosecution forces would be entitled to contest before the judge the President's contention that some parts of the tapes should remain secret because they involved national security or official Presidential activity that merited confidential status in the public interest.

Analysis 'Soon'

But whether these lawyers would base their arguments on any analysis of the tapes drafted by the White House, excerpts from the conversations made by the White House or the full text of the recordings Judge Sirica did not say.

Representatives of the judge, the President and the special prosecution force declined to provide any explanation of the judge's statement.

"All parties agreed," said the statement, "that the White House will prepare as soon as

possible an analysis of materials which will be transmitted to the court, together with the tapes and documents themselves."

Participating in the conference with the judge were J. Fred Buzhardt, special counsel to the President, and Philip Lacovara and Henry S. Ruth, counsel and deputy prosecutor of the special Watergate prosecution force.

"Before the court examines the materials," Judge Sirica continued, "it will hear argument in a closed session on the various claims of privilege. The court will thereafter examine the tapes and written material and make individual decisions on each claim of privilege; how-

ever, all these rulings will be handed down at one time, when the court's examination is completed."

Session Friday

The judge added that no schedule had been adopted for submission of the tapes and the closed hearings held on portions that President Nixon wants to keep from the grand

jury. The timing will probably be determined at another meeting on Friday.

The tapes were the subject of a fierce legal battle between Mr. Cox and the President, with the dismissed special prosecutor arguing that they were essential to his investigation of the Watergate burglary and cover-up. Mr. Nixon insisted that he had an absolute right to keep such White House records private.

No Evidentiary Basis

Ever since the District Court's first attempt to resolve the politically charged dispute, the decisions have been clouded with uncertainty. Judge Sirica ruled that the President must surrender the tapes to him for a screening of privileged material, but he declined to say what he would regard as privileged.

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia affirmed Judge Sirica's ruling with some modifications, specifying that Mr. Nixon could

refuse to hand over parts of the tapes that related to "national defense or foreign relations," but said that the special prosecutor could "inspect the claim and showing" and challenge its validity in a closed hearing before the judge.

The appellate court also ruled that the special prosecutor could call for a private hearing on other claims of privilege made by the President but never revealed what the evidentiary basis for such challenges would be.

In fact, the court hinted that the prosecutor could only have access to the tapes and documents themselves "for the limited purpose of aiding the court in determining the relevance of the material to the grand jury's investigations."

Other White House tape recordings are being sought by two former Nixon Cabinet officers, John N. Mitchell and Maurice H. Stans, as part of their defense against charges of conspiracy and obstruction of justice that they face in New York as part of the prosecution of Robert L. Vesco, indicted for illegal campaign contributions.

The White House has not said whether it would make these tapes available voluntarily.

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J. Fred Buzhardt, left, counsel to the President; Henry S. Ruth, center, deputy to Archibald Cox, former special prosecutor, and Philip Lacovara, prosecution counsel, after meeting with Judge John J. Sirica yesterday.

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