

# That 'lost' tape-- was Nixon told?

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — Presidential aide Stephen Bull has told investigators that four months ago President Nixon asked to be briefed on the contents of the April 15 Watergate tape and that White House lawyer J. Fred Buzhardt listened to it and presumably made a report.

The version is reported to be disputed privately by Buzhardt, who claims Bull misunderstood and that the tape he listened to was on a March 20 Nixon-John Dean talk, not the lost conversation of April 15.

The White House dropped <sup>21 OCT</sup> another bombshell in the tape controversy Wednesday by reporting that two crucial conversations between Nixon and Dean and John Mitchell never were recorded and these two of the key tapes sought by Watergate prosecutors never existed.

Bull told investigators, the sources said, that about June 27, just after Soviet Communist Party Chairman Leonid Brezhnev ended his talks with Nixon at the San Clemente Western White House, presidential chief of staff Alexander Haig told him the President wanted the April 15 tape.

Since no courier was available, Bull said, it was decided to have Buzhardt listen to the tape back in Washington and report to the President.

Bull then telephoned Secret Service technician Raymond Zumwalt, who maintained the secret recording system, and instructed him to give Buzhardt the tape. Bull said he assumes Haig talked directly to Buzhardt.

Bull told the investigators, the sources said, that he un-

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derstood the tape was of a meeting or a telephone call between Nixon and Dean.

Bull said that he later learned from Zumwalt that he had given the tape to Buzhardt and had remained with him while the White House special counsel listened.

Bull reportedly told the investigators he doesn't know of his own knowledge if Buzhardt passed on what he heard to the President.

This account by Bull dif-

fers in several respects from a version outlined at a hearing on the tape in federal court yesterday.

Zumwalt testified that among the batches of tapes checked out of White House safes was a phone call between Dean and the President that Buzhardt listened to. But Zumwalt was unable to specify the date of the tape.

Zumwalt also raised the possibility that former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman also may have checked out tapes for the week of April 15.

The White House says it did not determine until last weekend that the two disputed tapes did not exist.

"The President was look-

ing for them for several weeks and could not find the tapes" Buzhardt said. "So he asked me to check."

Not until <sup>31 OCT</sup> Wednesday morning Buzhardt recalled, did he finally determine positively there were no such tapes.

When asked why there never was any check for the tapes during the prolonged litigation Buzhardt said "We assumed the system was running."

During the court hearing yesterday the White House offered to let Judge John J. Sirica listen to the tape for

the weekend or April 15 to show it ran out before the Dean meeting.

According to Buzhardt the tape blips out during a Presidential conversation with former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

White House lawyers said they are prepared to show that the tapes run a standard 1800 feet in six hours and have not been altered.

The President's schedule of meetings on April 14 in the Executive Office Building also was heavy for a Saturday, and ran more than five hours, White House testimony indicated yesterday.

Other testimony pointed out that the timer on the recorder was not set to switch to a new tape that weekend.

Buzhardt also produced computer logs of persons who entered the recording room next to the President's office to show no one entered the room and tampered with the recorders during the weekend of April 15.

Lawyers from the former office of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox remained unconvinced there was no tape of the April 15 meeting with Dean.

They were curious that the tape box for tapes removed from the machine on April 16 is marked "Part One." Secret Service agents in charge of the recording said this did not necessarily mean there was another part.

Among the tapes checked out of the safe on July 11 by Bull was one for the President's office for the week of April 11 through 16. The day before, on July 10, two reels of a Sept. 15, 1972, conversation were taken out.

Haldeman testified before the Senate Watergate Committee that the President permitted him to take home several tapes last July after he resigned, but said he listened only to tapes of conversations on Sept. 15, 1972 and March 21, 1973.

Zumwalt could provide no information to show that these tapes actually went to Haldeman.

[9 to 11 Jul]