

## Haig's Testimony

# Nixon's Reaction to Foulup Over Tapes

## Aide Says the President Was 'Almost Incredulous' Over Disclosure of Gap

Washington

President Nixon was "very, very disturbed" and "almost incredulous" when he finally learned of the full extent and import of the 18-minute gap on a crucial White House tape recording, Alexander M. Haig testified yesterday.

Haig, the President's chief of staff, said that he had told Mr. Nixon on November 15 that the gap in the tape lasted not for just five minutes, as previously believed, but instead for 18 minutes — and that the tape, contrary to what the President had thought previously, was covered by the Watergate prosecution's subpoena.

Haig also said that he had received this information the day before, November 14, from one of the President's lawyers. But he had decided to withhold the information from Mr. Nixon until November 15, he said, to allow the President to give a speech to a group of realtors here without the burden of the new information.

"I felt the situation was sufficiently worrisome, I should let him complete his speech," Haig said.

Last week Mr. Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, testified that on October 1 she had pressed the wrong button on her tape recorder while reviewing the tape, and that when she discovered her mistake she found, for several minutes, a "shrill" buzzing sound on the tape instead of conversation. She testified also that she had informed the President immediately.

The White House position,

Back Page Col. 1

### From Page 1

however, has been that the gap on the tape was not discovered until November 14, and that it was not until November 14 that the White House realized the gap tape was among those subpoenaed.

Miss Woods had testified that the President told her October 1 "not to worry" about the mistake, because that conversation had not been covered by the subpoena. She also modified her testimony somewhat to say that she did not understand how she could have caused more than five minutes of the gap.

Yesterday Haig backed up at least the first contention, saying that Mr. Nixon had told him of Miss Woods' report shortly after she had made it, and had said that the tape had not been subpoenaed.

Haig also said he had been told a few days earlier by lawyer J. Fred Buzhardt Jr. that the conversation in question was not covered by the special Watergate prosecution's subpoena of tapes and documents of nine presidential conversations.

The subject arose on September 29, Haig said, when Miss Woods and Stephen

Bull, a presidential aide, were at Camp David preparing to play the subpoenaed tapes so that Miss Woods could type up summaries of the conversations.

The disputed conversation is Mr. Nixon's discussion with H. R. Haldeman, his former chief of staff, on June 20, 1972, three days after the Watergate break-in. The 18-minute gap obliterates the only Watergate-related segment of the conversation, a sequence in which, according to Haldeman's notes of the meeting, the President ordered a "public relations campaign" to counteract the effect of the break-in.

The Haldeman notes, according to previous testimony, were found late on November 15. As Haig recounted it yesterday, the discovery, through the notes that "a portion of the gap included some discussion of Watergate was not a piece of news I accepted with tranquility."

It was also a piece of news that he had to relay immediately to the President, he said. The President's reaction, as he recalled it, was to say "we have to do whatever is technically feasible to reconstitute the tape if that can be done."

Haig repeated earlier testimony regarding the White House's queries to a technical expert about possible ways to reconstruct the tape. He did not offer any information and was not asked about what other steps the White House actually took.

Earlier, Miss Woods was called hurriedly to the witness stand for the third time and she again said forcefully, "I could see no way at all I could have caused the 18-minute gap."

She complained to the judge that news accounts made her feel she was on trial by newspapers, radio





AP Wirephoto

**ALEXANDER HAIG**

**He knew a day earlier**

and television and that she had read that Sirica had reasonable doubt that she told the truth.

"I know you're not satisfied with my testimony," she told Sirica.

At her first appearance November 8 Miss Woods said nothing about any accidental erasure. She mentioned it for the first time when she was recalled November 26.

Sirica told her he had not commented on her testimony and said, "You see, even judges get accused. The first thing you know, I'll be on trial."

*New York Times*



UPI Telephoto

**ROSE MARY WOODS ARRIVING AT COURT**  
**She complained to judge about news accounts**