

'Five Had Access To Erased Tape'

Assistant to President Names Nixon, 4 Others-- Denies There Were More

Washington

A White House aide testified yesterday that he knows of only five people who ever had possession of the Watergate tape on which an 18½-minute segment of conversation was erased.

Stephen B. Bull, a special assistant to the president, told a federal court hearing that the only people he knew of who had access to that tape were himself; the president; Mr. Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods; J. Fred Buzhardt, a White House lawyer, and General John Bennett, an aide.

Bull denied telling a New York Times reporter that a number of other people also had access to the tape of a June 20, 1972, conversation between the President and his then - chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman.

Bull testified shortly after U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica raised the possibility that he might refer the case to a grand jury.

"I have to decide whether or not I'm going to recommend to the special prosecutor that this case should be submitted or whether the special prosecutor should seriously consider submitting it to the grand jury," the judge said.

"I'll make that decision in due course," he said. It was the first time he had given any indication in open court of what action he might take.

Tuesday a panel of technical experts said there were at least five and perhaps as

from his office and modified so that it could not record at all.

20? 50?
Eight days later he said he received a request from Buzhardt that the recorder be picked up from his office

SFChronicle JAN 17 1974 FBI Probing Tape Gap

Washington

The FBI has begun an investigation of the erasure of the 18½-minute segment of the June 20, 1972, White House tape recording.

The investigation, requested by special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, is the firmest indication he has concluded the erasure may be a criminal act.

Washington Post

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while trying to transcribe the June 20 tape.

An assistant special prosecutor pointed out that there were initials next to the signature which seemed to indicate someone had signed Bull's name because he was not available at the time.

"No one is authorized to sign my name," Bull said.

"So this is an unauthorized signature?" Bull was asked.

"Yes, indeed," he replied.

Bull testified that he had listened to the tapes to determine where the subpoenaed conversations began on each reel and had marked them so that Miss Woods would know where to begin transcribing.

He said he never listened to the Haldeman portion of the June 20 tape and never heard the buzz later found on the recording.

According to Haldeman's notes, the obliterated segment contained the only discussion, at that meeting, of

and restored to its original shape.

Sims also said that to his knowledge Bull never has been supplied by the Secret Service with the suspect tape recorder except on October 1 when it was new.

Associated Press

the Watergate break-in that had occurred three days before.

Louis Sims, chief of the technical service division of the Secret Service, testified that he was unable to supply documentary evidence on who had used the tape recorders at various times.

He said those records were destroyed each time a machine was returned to Secret Service custody.

Sims also testified that the microphones in the President's Oval Office and his other offices remain in place but the wires that had connected them to recorders have been cut.

The tape system was dismantled last July 18 two days after Alexander Butterfield, testifying before the Senate Watergate committee, revealed its existence.

"The microphones are still in place on this date," Sims said. "My recollection is on the 18th all equipment you see listed was removed. The only thing left was the wires."

Sims also testified that on October 1 the Secret Service purchased the Uher 5000 tape recorder that the experts said was probably used when the erasures were made and that he took it to Bull.

Bull had testified that he took the recorder to Miss Woods, who had asked for a transcribing device with a foot pedal. The pedal would enable her to transcribe without taking her hands from the typewriter to use the controls.

Sims said he delivered the machine to Bull at 1:15 p.m.

Miss Woods had testified that on that day she listened to the June 20 tape for about 2½ hours and in the course of transcribing it she discovered that she had pushed the record button. She said she went into the President's office at about 2:15 p.m. to inform him that she had made a mistake.

The White House log for that date showed that she met with Mr. Nixon at 2:08 p.m.

The Haldeman conversation was the second of two on that particular recording.

Sims also testified that on November 12 Bull telephoned to ask that the particular recorder be picked up