

Tape Report Spurs Effort To Press Nixon Inquiries

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 16—Expert testimony that the 18½-minute gap in a critical tape recording of White House conversations was caused by five erasures and rerecordings has touched off moves toward further investigation of the Nixon Administration's actions in the Watergate scandal.

Only last week the special Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, told newsmen that his investigation had led to no new areas of interest of "any special significance." Today, as a result of the growing suspicion about the taped conversations, sources close to the investigation said, Mr. Jaworski's office is moving to develop detailed information on access to and possible manipulation of the tapes.

This renewed interest in scandal-related activities at the White House is only one of a number of reactions to the latest in the series of disclosures that have rocked the Nixon Administration for the last year.

Other related developments today included the following:

¶ Sources close to some members of the Senate Watergate committee who had hoped to win enough votes next week to end the public life of that

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committee reported today that the new disclosure would probably generate pressure that kills those hopes.

¶A ranking Republican of the House Judiciary Committee's ad hoc committee on impeachment said he expected that the committee "will insist" on evidence as to how the erasure occurred.

¶A Democratic member of the House Judiciary Committee said that he would meet any attempt by the White House to withhold evidence from the impeachment inquiry with a resolution to "immediately impeach Mr. Nixon."

Expert testimony yesterday in Federal Judge John J. Sirica's court that the gap on the June 20, 1972, White House tapes involved at least five separate erasures or rerecordings dumbfounded some supporters of the President.

Senator Bill Brock, Republican of Tennessee, said on radio over the Columbia Broadcasting System that it was like waiting for another shoe to drop and added:

"I don't know how many shoes there are to fall. I feel like I've been dealing with a centipede this last year."

Some Crucial Evidence

The June 20 tape was a crucial bit of evidence on the President's personal knowledge of the original Watergate break-in because the conversation on that tape was of a meeting held three days after the incident.

The House Republican leader, John J. Rhodes of Arizona, suggested that reaction blaming the President in connection with the tapes was unwarranted.

"There is no evidence," he said, "to connect the President with the erasure. Nobody really knows what was on the tape."

Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, second-ranking member of the House G.O.P. leadership, remarked: "This is the penultimate link in the chain of evidence that has steadily been forged to show that there has been a conscious, deliberate effort to obstruct justice. One has the feeling of approaching the final dénouement in this drama."

fail to see how this can do anything but accelerate the tempo of the impeachment process."

The thrust of the renewed investigative interest will apparently depend largely upon how Judge Sirica pursues the matter in court. The special prosecutor's office, for example, could develop further evidence on the handling of the tapes through public examination of witnesses in the courtroom. Otherwise, the prosecutor would follow the established pattern of investigation aimed at possible presentment to one of three Federal grand juries now hearing Watergate-related evidence.

Representative Robert McClory, Republican of Illinois, tied the matter closely to the House impeachment inquiry now under way. Mr. McClory, a member of the House Judiciary

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Impeachment, said he had no information "upon which to assume the President knows anything about the erasures or the manner in which they were caused."

But, his statement continued, "I expect my House Judiciary Committee will insist upon direct evidence on this crucial issue in the impending impeachment inquiry."

Another Judiciary Committee member, Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, indicated that the matter could itself become grounds for impeachment.

A meeting will be scheduled early next week by the House Judiciary Committee to begin determination of such crucial questions as what offenses are impeachable and how the committee can gain access to White House information.