

HOUSE PANEL GETS JURY'S NIXON DATA

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Briefcase of Evidence Goes to Inquiry on Impeachment After 25-Day Delay

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WASHINGTON, March 26—Attorneys for the House Judiciary Committee received today a briefcase of evidence relating to President Nixon's role in the Watergate scandal.

Counsel for the House impeachment inquiry spent more than two hours in private with Federal District Judge John J. Sirica checking each item of the material, which has been described by attorneys for the special Watergate prosecutor as "evidence" that "deals with the President of the United States."

The transfer of the documents was made 25 days after the grand jury, as a result of a 21-month investigation of the Watergate scandal, indicted seven former White House aides or top officials in the 1972 Nixon re-election campaign. The grand jury also presented to Judge Sirica the briefcase of evidence and a two-page report that it had concluded should be considered by the impeachment inquiry.

Delivery of the documents had been delayed since March 1 while attorneys for two of those indicted sought to block release of the material on the ground that it might prejudice the eventual trial of

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their clients.

Last week the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected these arguments, made by attorneys for the former White House chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, and his former aide, Gordon C. Strachan.

The evidence, whose transfer was announced yesterday, could be crucial to the Judiciary Committee's eventual recommendation on whether President Nixon should be impeached.

The grand jury at one point, according to sources familiar with the case, requested guidance on whether a sitting President could be indicted but the special Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, concluded that the matter was so clouded legally as to be an improper subject for a grand jury.

Tight security was maintained when counsel for the House committee emerged from Judge Sirica's chambers with the evidence, escorted by four policemen from the Federal Protection Service.

Doar Carries Briefcase

Clutching the briefcase, John M. Doar, chief counsel for the impeachment inquiry, swept by newsmen in the hall behind the police shield. He was accompanied by Albert E. Jenner Jr., the minority counsel, and Robert Shelton, who is in charge of office security for the impeachment inquiry.

"We just checked all the items, that's all," Mr. Doar said. "I have nothing more to say."

The Judiciary Committee chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr., a New Jersey Democrat, has announced that the material will be handled under extremely tight security. Only Mr. Doar and Mr. Jenner are to have immediate access to the evidence.

Under rules adopted by the committee, Mr. Rodino and Representative Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, the ranking Republican member, will also have access to the material, but they are not expected to examine it within the next few days.

Committee members have been constantly concerned over the possibility that some of the materials gathered in the inquiry could become public knowledge through leaks by staff members. Both Democrats and Republicans on the committee have responded sharply to suggestions from the White House that the committee could



Associated Press

Peter W. Rodino Jr., impeachment inquiry chairman, after he heard material from the Watergate grand jury had been received by his committee.

be expected to leak evidence as it was gathered.

The implication yesterday by the White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, that the committee staff was working too slowly brought a bipartisan response from the committee today.

"Most members of the committee really resent that attempt to discredit their work," said Representative Thomas F. RAILSBACK, Republican of Illinois.

Mr. Rodino added, "The White House is making all sorts of suggestions. They [the staff] are working night and day. Anyone can see the lights burning into the night."

The committee is expected to avoid public meetings over the next few days to allow the staff time to digest the new material and complete work on memorandums on procedural issues.

The "quiet time," as it is called by some committee members, is also designed to put off partisan divisions like the one that began to open last week over whether the President should be represented by counsel during the committee's investigations. Democrats say he should not and Republicans say he should, but an open split was avoided by assigning the question to staff research on precedents from other impeachment investigations.