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**Private Sources for Taps
Are Linked to White House**

By JOHN M. CREWDSON
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WASHINGTON, May 1—The White House employed “private sources” to tap the telephones of journalists almost from the beginning of the first Nixon Administration, according to transcripts of Oval Office conversations between the President and his aides.

President Nixon had previously taken responsibility for a highly secret Federal Bureau of Investigation wiretap operation that involved 13 Government officials and four newsmen between May, 1969, and February, 1971.

But the transcripts of tape recordings of two Presidential meetings on April 16, 1973, in addition to disclosing for the first time the existence of wiretaps installed before the F.B.I. became involved, also cast doubt on the basis for the

sensitive foreign policy initiatives” that he had begun.

In the statement, released last May 22, Mr. Nixon disclosed only a “special program” of “fewer than 20” wiretaps, installed without court orders, that he had personally authorized on the ground of national security.

He did not mention any wiretaps predating the F.B.I. operation, or any that had been installed on Government officials or newsmen by individuals outside official F.B.I. channels.

Shortly after the meeting with Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichmann broke up, Mr. Dean was summoned to the President’s office.

There was a discussion of the limits of executive privilege, and Mr. Nixon told his counsel that “nothing is privileged that involves wrongdoing.”

President’s insistence that the F.B.I. taps were warranted by “national security” interests.

And Mr. Nixon touches on, but does not resolve, the lingering mystery of why the remaining F.B.I. taps were abruptly removed in 1971 when he tells John W. Dean 3d “We just knocked it off altogether” when “the hullabaloo developed.”

Nixon Saw Two Aides

On the morning of April 16, as the Watergate cover-up was beginning to unravel, President Nixon met with H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, at the time his two principal assistants. A transcript of that meeting shows a general concern about the extent of the knowledge of John W. Dean 3d, the White House counsel who had begun talking with Watergate prosecutors about the Nixon Administration’s sensitive activities.

“I want to nail down what Dean said about other bugs on the White House and so forth and so on,” the President told Mr. Ehrlichman. “I assume that is the plumbers operation.”

“No, no,” said Mr. Ehrlichman, then the President’s chief domestic adviser. “What he is referring to is the F.B.I.’s bugs on the journalists in the first year . . . These were almost all F.B.I. bugs.”

“The whole operation,” Mr. Ehrlichman reminded the President, was begun “because you were afraid there were leaks out at the N.S.C. [the National Security Council, six of whose officials were tapped by the F.B.I.], and you were trying to find them.”

“I thought they were due to the F.B.I.,” replied the President.

Nixon Statement Recalled

During the conversation, Mr. Nixon asked Mr. Ehrlichman whether “I should not tell him [Mr. Dean] today that anything in that area is national security.”

“I think you should,” answered Mr. Ehrlichman.

One month later, the President stated the reason for the 17 F.B.I. wiretaps with more forcefulness when he said, in a public statement, that all had been installed to find and stop leaks of “secret information” from the N.S.C. that had jeopardized “a number of highly

Wiretaps Discussed

Then the President raised the subject of the wiretaps. “With regard to what we call the electronic stuff,” he said, “what I have now found is in the leak area. That I consider privileged.”

He had, Mr. Nixon said, “checked the facts” on the wiretaps and found that “there were some done through private sources,” whom he did not otherwise identify.

“Most of it,” he continued, “was done through the bureau after we got—Hoover didn’t want to do Kraft.”

The reference was to Joseph Kraft, the syndicated columnist. Investigative sources have said that a wiretap was installed on the telephone at Mr. Kraft’s Georgetown home by John Ragan, a retired F.B.I. agent, at the behest of John Caulfield, a former New York City policeman employed for a time by Mr. Ehrlichman as a private White House investigator.

There has been no indication until now, however, that others besides Mr. Kraft had been wiretapped by individuals not associated with the F.B.I. Mr. Nixon apparently regretted the use of “private sources,” however, before “we finally turned it over to Hoover.”

“If we had had [the late J. Edgar] Hoover [then the F.B.I. director] under more control” he told Mr. Dean, “it would have been better.”

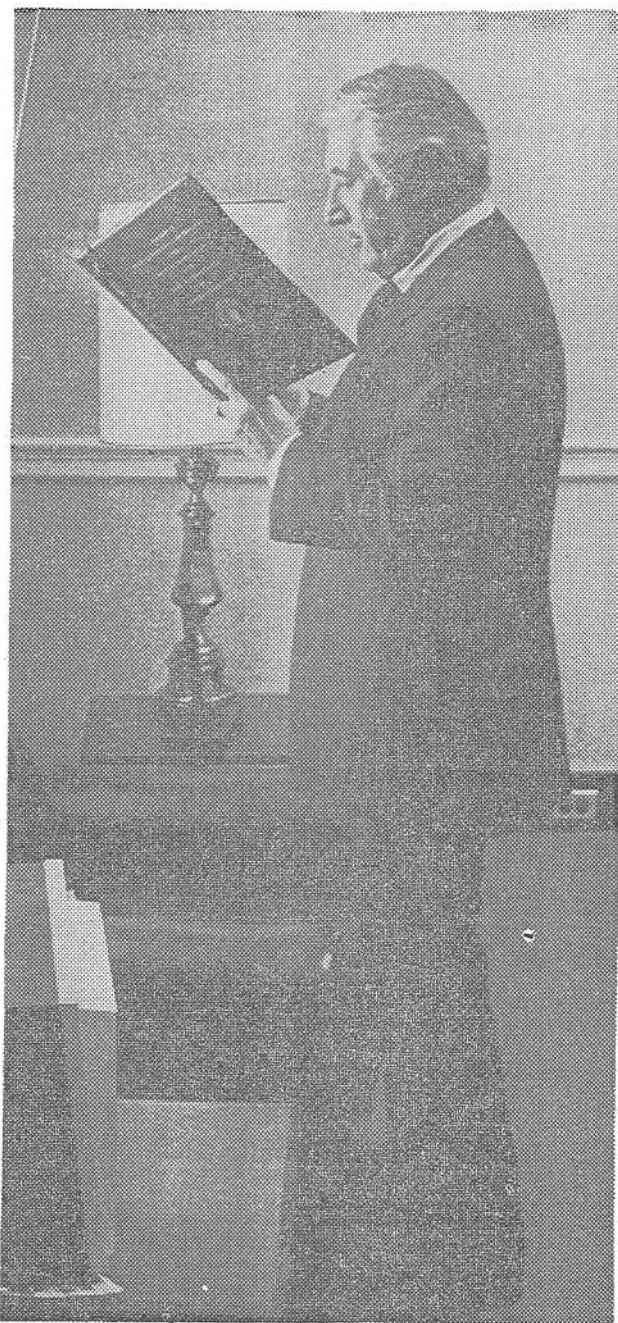
It has never been clear why the F.B.I. wiretaps that remained in effect in February of 1971 were terminated then, Mr. Nixon’s statement May 22 leaves the impression that they were halted after information was obtained that made it possible to curtail the leaks.

But the President told Mr. Dean that the operation was ended “when the hullabaloo developed.”

“But,” he added, “in my view, I consider that privileged.”

4 Killed in Iowa Silo Blast

SIoux CITY, Iowa, April 30 (UPI)—An explosion blasted the top off a silo at a grain elevator Tuesday, killing four persons and injuring one. The blast and flying debris also damaged several railroad cars and buildings in the vicinity. Investigators said they believed the blast was a “dust explosion.”



The New York Times/George Tames
Peter W. Rodino Jr., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, reading his copy of the transcripts of the edited White House tapes yesterday in Washington.