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Revenge Talk Against Post Was Cut From Transcript

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President Nixon, during a meeting in the Oval Office on Sept. 15, 1972, threatened economic retaliation against The Washington Post for its coverage of the Watergate affair, according to a complete transcript of the session.

Mr. Nixon also threatened in the same conversation to "Fix the son-of-a-bitch," Edward Bennett Williams, who was counsel for the Democratic National Committee and also principal attorney for The Post.

These disclosures are contained in portions of the transcript that Mr. Nixon withheld when he made it public 16 days ago.

The full transcript shows that Mr. Nixon said: "The main thing is The Post is going to have damnable, damnable problems out of this one. They have a television station . . . And they're going to have to get it renewed."

Mr. Nixon's explicit threat that action would be taken to challenge renewal of the license held by The Post Company occurred during a meeting with his counsel, John W. Dean III, and H. R. Haldeman, then the White House chief of staff.

According to the full transcript, Mr. Nixon first suggested that retaliatory action be taken against the newspaper, when he was informed by Dean that The Post had assigned "a real large team" to investigate Watergate.

At the time, two television stations owned by Post-Newsweek Stations, Inc., were about to seek renewal of their licenses from the Federal Communications Commission. Challenges to The Post Company's ownership of broadcast properties were filed by persons closely associated with Mr. Nixon and his re-election campaign.

"They've got a radio station too," Haldeman added, according to the full transcript of the Sept. 15 meeting. To which Mr. Nixon replied:

"Does that come up too?"

A moment later in the conversation, the President added: "And it's going to be God damn active here (in the license renewal area) . . . Well, the game has to be played awfully rough."

The full transcript of the Sept. 15, 1972, meeting was made by the staff of the House Judiciary Committee, which is investigating the possible impeachment of Mr. Nixon. A copy of the transcript was obtained yesterday by The Washington Post.

White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler last night called the leak of the transcript "a total breach of the rules of the committee as set forth by the chairman

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White House tape transcripts vary in several instances with transcripts made by the House Judiciary Committee.
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and vice chairman in their opening statement and absolutely contrary to the suggestion that the House committee was involved in a fair and disciplined proceedings."

Ziegler said that although he was not familiar with discussions relating to the Washington Post, "the Washington Post has not and in reality is not facing any threats from the administration."

The Sept. 15 meeting took place on the same day that the Watergate grand jury returned its initial indictment against the seven Watergate burglars. The discussion of The Post occurs during a portion of the meeting in which various options for dealing with administration "enemies" are discussed by the President, his chief of staff and young counsel.

The discussion about retaliation against The Post came about a month and a half after The Post reported that Nixon campaign contributions had gone to a Watergate burglar and several weeks before the paper reported that a widespread campaign of political sabotage and espionage had been directed by a White House aide against the Democrats.

Some members of the House Judiciary Committee who listened to the tape yesterday variously described its contents as "revolting," "sickening," "devastating," and said it could damage further the President's fight against impeachment.

The White House-prepared transcript of the same Sept. 15 meeting does not include most of the conversation in which Mr. Nixon and his aides discuss retaliation against those perceived as enemies of the administration. Instead the White House transcript contains the notation, "further conversation following unrelated to Watergate," at that point in the dialogue.

A comparison of the House Committee transcript with the one prepared by the White House also shows that the beginning of the Sept. 15 meeting was eliminated in the White House version, which states: "This opens just as Dean comes in the door."

The fuller transcript prepared by the House Committee, however, includes three pages of conversation between

Haldeman and the President before Dean enters the room. It opens with Haldeman observing of Dean: "He is one of the quiet guys that gets a lot done. That was a good move, too, bringing Dean in . . ." To which the President replies, "Yeah."

The discussion of The Post occurs near the end of the meeting on Sept. 15.

Less than two months after Mr. Nixon's re-election, four challenges to the Post-Newsweek stations in Jacksonville (WJXT-TV) and Miami (WPLG-TV) were on file with the Federal Communications Commission. The challenges are still pending.

One Jacksonville challenge was filed by a group headed by George Champion Jr., Florida finance chairman of the Nixon re-election campaign in 1972. Another challenge in Jacksonville came from a group headed by Fitzhugh K. Powell, a supporter of Alabama Gov. George Wallace in 1972. A third Jacksonville challenge came from a group of local businessmen.

The Miami challenge was made by a group that included two law partners of former Sen. George Smathers (D-Fla.), a friend of Charles (Bebe) Rebozo. Smathers introduced Rebozo to Mr. Nixon.

The Champion group in Jacksonville received advice on its challenge from Glenn J. Sedam Jr., general counsel of the Committee for the Re-election of the President in 1972. Sedam later said he took an interest in the matter as a private lawyer.

The White House said in January, 1973, that it had not encouraged any of the challenges. "No, absolutely not," press secretary Ronald Ziegler told reporters when asked about White House involvement.

Larry Israel, president of The Washington Post, parent company of Post-Newsweek Stations, Inc., said he would have no comment on the material in the transcripts until he had had an opportunity to study it.

The version of the Sept. 15 meeting released earlier this month by the White House does not contain these portions that the White House said were deleted because they were "unrelated to Watergate" or "presidential actions."

Earlier in the meeting the discussion in the Oval Office

concerned the Watergate civil suit filed by the Democratic Party. Edward Bennett Williams was acting as attorney for the Democrats in that suit at that time.

"You want to remember, too, he's an attorney for The Washington Post," the President said to Dean.

Dean responded: "I'm well aware of that."

The President said: "I think we are going to fix the son-of-a-bitch. Believe me. We are going to. We've got to, because he's a bad man."

The President then maintained that Williams "misbehaved very badly" in a matter relating to James R. Hoffa, former Teamster's union presi-

dent, who had been imprisoned on federal charges. Williams was the attorney for Hoffa. Hoffa was pardoned by the President in December, 1972.

It was unclear what Mr. Nixon meant by Williams' alleged misbehavior.

Earlier in the meeting, Haldeman raised Williams' name and suggested that the FBI tie Williams up with questioning.

Haldeman specifically said, "The bureau ought to go into Edward Bennet Williams and let's start questioning that son-of-a-bitch. Keep him tied up for a couple of weeks."

"Yeah, I hope they do," the President responded.

The tapes are particularly significant to the Judiciary Committee because it was the first chance members have had to judge the accuracy of the White House-edited transcripts by listening to the tapes through the Committee's audio equipment that is superior to the White House's.

The equipment, according to the Committee staff, is able to eliminate background noises on the tapes that the White House equipment picked up.

At a briefing after the afternoon's closed presentation of evidence by Special Counsel John Doar's staff, Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) said the Committee spent about 40 minutes listening to two tapes.

The first was of the Sept. 15, 1972, Nixon-Dean conversation and the second was a June 30, 1972, conversation among Mr. Nixon, Haldeman and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell the day before Mitchell resigned as head of the Committee to Re-elect the President.

At the briefing, Rodino said there were differences between the tapes and the edited transcripts, but he said whether the differences are substantial "each member must judge." Rodino said he had reached no conclusion on whether omissions in the edited transcripts were deliberate.

Committee member Rep. Je-

rome Waldie (D-Calif.) made it clear he thought the omissions were deliberate.

He described the audio quality of the Sept. 15 tape as "excellent," and added, "The shabbiness of the President has been exaggerated and enhanced by the portions that were deleted . . . The transcripts are considerably incomplete."

Rep. Edward Mezvinsky (D-Iowa), another Committee member, said the difference "makes clear that the edited transcripts are not the best evidence."

Rep. Robert Drinan (D-Mass.) said there was nothing of substance new in the Sept. 15 tape but said "when you ac-

tually hear it in the President's voice it makes a bigger impact." He said he was particularly struck by references to plans to block Watergate hearings then being tentatively planned by Rep. Wright Patman (D-Tex.).

A Republican supporter of the President, Rep. Charles Wiggins of California, said that the Sept. 15 conversation would not support a charge of presidential cover-up.

"If anyone tried to make a cover-up case on the basis of the Sept. 15 tape, he'd have a pretty hard time. It would be impossible," Wiggins said.

The June 30 tape, Wiggins said, "was not an important tape."