

## JAWORSKI OBTAINS TAPE OF KEY TALK

Ehrlichman-Mitchell Parley  
Seen as Important Link  
in Burglary Cover-Up

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

The special Watergate prosecutor has obtained a tape recording of an April, 1973, White House meeting that investigators say represents a key link in the cover-up in the Watergate bugging case.

The meeting, which occurred April 14, involved John D. Ehrlichman, who was President Nixon's chief domestic adviser, and John N. Mitchell, head of the President's re-election campaign. Because President Nixon was not involved in the conversation, which was held in Mr. Ehrlichman's office, the tape was not among those subpoenaed by the special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski.

Sources who confirmed that Mr. Jaworski now has the tape in his possession declined to say how it was received or what, precisely, it contained.

Much is already known, however, about the general purposes and nature of the conversation. According to the White House transcript of a meeting earlier that same day between Mr. Nixon, Mr. Ehrlichman, and H. R. Haldeman, the President's chief of staff, Mr. Ehrlichman hoped to persuade Mr. Mitchell to take the blame for Watergate — to tell Federal prosecutors that he was "both morally and legally responsible" for the bugging and the subsequent cover-up.

After the meeting with Mr.

Mitchell, Mr. Ehrlichman called the President to report that he had failed. Far from accepting blame, Mr. Ehrlichman reported — again according to the edited transcripts — Mr. Mitchell had accused the White House of complicity in the cover-up, "lobbed mud balls at the White House at every opportunity," and even suggested at one point that some payments of "hush money" to the original Watergate defendants had come directly from the executive mansion.

Given the nature of the Ehrlichman-Mitchell exchange, investigators think the actual recording may shed considerable light on the cover-up.

### Outline of Plan

During the early-morning meeting in the Oval Office on April 14, the White House transcript shows, Mr. Ehrlichman outlined for the President and Mr. Haldeman how he planned to get Mr. Mitchell to accept responsibility for Watergate.

"The purpose of the mission," he began, "is to go up and bring him to a focus on this: The jig is up. And the President strongly feels that the only way that this thing can end up being even a little net plus for the Administration and for the Presidency and preserve some thread is for you to go in and voluntarily make a statement (to the prosecutors)."

The President: A statement (unintelligible)."

Mr. Ehrlichman: "I am both morally and legally responsible."

At one point during the preliminary discussion, Mr. Ehrlichman remarked that he "would like a record of my conversation" with Mr. Mitchell.

The transcript shows Mr. Nixon as having suggested then that Mr. Ehrlichman "gear up" the tape recording machinery in Mr. Ehrlichman's office.

"Do you know, do you have a way to gear it up?" he asked.

"Yeh," Mr. Ehrlichman replied, "I've done it before."

"Well, go gear it," ordered the President, adding a moment later, "I don't want to hear the record, I want to say . . . don't have me hear the record."

Ironically, in his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee last summer, Mr. Mitchell expressed a belief that Mr. Ehrlichman had indeed recorded their spirited discussion.

Mr. Mitchell recalled for the committee that, during most of his visits to Mr. Ehrlichman's White House office, "we sat on a sofa around the coffee table."

But on the afternoon of April 14, he said "he invited me to sit in a chair in front of his desk and fudged around a little bit, so it occurred to me that the switch in pattern of operation might very well have something to do with where the microphone was."