

NEW GAP IS FOUND ON NIXON'S TAPES

19 Minutes Is Reported Lost on Ehrlichman Meeting

WASHINGTON, July 11 (AP) —An assistant special Watergate prosecutor, Richard Ben Veniste, said today that another gap had been discovered in White House recordings of Presidential conversations.

In a hearing before United States District Judge John J. Sirica, Mr. Ben-Veniste mentioned the gap in asking the court for an order directing the White House to begin indexing and to take precautions with various White House tapes relating to the Watergate case. "We have learned that one of the tapes contains almost a 19-minute gap," Mr. Ben-Veniste said.

He also said the special prosecutor's office had learned of another tape being torn and mangled by White House secretaries during transcription.

Mr. Ben-Veniste made no further mention of the damaged tapes and would not elaborate after the court session. However, he said the tape with the 19-minute gap was not one of those being subpoenaed by the prosecutor's office for use in the Watergate case.

Data for Supreme Court

Judge Sirica did not issue the order Mr. Ben-Veniste requested, but he did order the record of today's hearing over a tape dispute forwarded to the Supreme Court, which is studying the question of whether the President has to release tapes and other Watergate evidence.

The record was sent to the Supreme Court at the request of another assistant special prosecutor, James Neal, who rejected a White House offer to verify portions of 20 of the 64 tapes the prosecutor's office has subpoenaed.

Mr. Neal complained that the White House offer would allow Judge Sirica access only to portions of the tapes identical to transcripts already released by President Nixon. Judge Sirica could not hear all of the tapes, and the tapes themselves could not be used as courtroom evidence, according to the offer.

"The offer is illusory," Mr. Neal said. "It means nothing." John J. Chester, a White House lawyer, objected to the record being sent to the Supreme Court. He said the issue had adequately been argued before the high court last Monday.

Nixon-Ehrlichman Tack

The tape with a gap mentioned by Mr. Ben-Veniste was of a March 20, 1973, conversation between Mr. Nixon and John D. Ehrlichman, former Presidential domestic aide.

Mr. Ehrlichman's log shows he met or spoke with the President twice on March 20, once at 11:30 A.M. and again at 4 P.M. with George Bush, then the Republican national chairman.

The afternoon meeting between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Bush followed by 30 minutes a meeting Mr. Ehrlichman had with John W. Dean 3d, then White House counsel.

Mr. Dean told the President by telephone that evening that he wanted to meet Mr. Nixon and go over the full Watergate's story. They met the next morning, and Mr. Dean described the details of the cover-up, saying there was a "cancer growing on the Presidency."

Previously, an 18-minute gap was found in a June 20, 1972, taped conversation between Mr. Nixon and H. R. Haldeman, former Presidential chief of staff.