

President's Response To Order



AP Wirephoto

JAMES D. ST. CLAIR
He read the statement

Laguna Beach

President Nixon pledged yesterday to comply in all respects with a Supreme Court order to turn over documents and tape recordings of 64 conversations for the Watergate coverup trial.

His attorney, James D. St. Clair, read a statement by Mr. Nixon in a national broadcast and said he would immediately begin preparing the tapes and other documents for the U.S. District Court in Washington.

The tapes were subpoenaed by Leon Jaworski, the Watergate special prosecutor, for the trial of some of Mr. Nixon's former top aides.

St. Clair gave no timetable for the turnover but spoke of a "time-consuming" process

Back Page Col. 6

From Page 1

of analyzing and indexing the tapes.

The statement said Mr. Nixon hoped that his action "will contribute to strengthening" the principles of executive privilege and not serve as a precedent to destroy it.

The President had fought release of the tapes on grounds of executive privilege but the court said the need for the tapes in the Watergate coverup trial superseded any generalized claim of such privilege.

St. Clair first read the brief presidential statement, drafted after several hours of discussions yesterday between Mr. Nixon and his chief Watergate defense attorney.

He then said he would begin work on the turnover of tapes.

St. Clair declined to answer questions as he spoke to newsmen at the press center located 13 miles north of Mr. Nixon's California home.

Mr. Nixon said in the statement he was disappointed in the verdict, announced eight hours earlier by a unanimous court. But he added:

"I have instructed Mr. St. Clair to take whatever measures are necessary so as to comply with that decision in all respects."

Sirica now must review each of the tapes for relevance to the coverup trial, which is scheduled to begin September 9 for six former administration and Nixon campaign aides, including H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John N. Mitchell.

Previous tapes given to Sirica have eventually gone to the House Judiciary Committee which is debating articles of impeachment.

The possibility remained that Mr. Nixon's attorneys could challenge Sirica's rulings of relevance on various of the tapes, which cover a time span from June 20, 1972 — three days after the Watergate break-in—to June 4, 1973.

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