

President Surrenders 20 Tapes

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President Nixon surrendered 20 subpoenaed Watergate tape recordings to U. S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica yesterday in the first step toward compliance with the Supreme Court decision last week overruling his blanket claims of executive privilege.

Mr. Nixon's chief defense counsel, James D. St. Clair, said he knew of no gaps in the recordings turned over yesterday, but Watergate special prosecutors pointed to one reel that had apparently run out in mid-conversation.

St. Clair said he would have to check White House copies of the recordings to see if anything was lost before the Secret Service installed a new reel.

The conversation in question involved an April 17, 1973, meeting in the Oval Office between the President and former aides H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman.

While White House lawyers delivered the first batch of tapes to Sirica, Mr. Nixon spent much of the day in his study listening to others that he is scheduled to turn over as quickly as possible.

Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski has subpoenaed the recordings of 64 conversations, which he said are needed for the Sept. 9 cover-up trial of six of the President's former top aides and campaign advisers.

The President still intends to claim privilege both for portions of the tapes turned over yesterday and for others that have yet to be produced.

Under the Supreme Court ruling, Mr. Nixon can still ask the court to maintain the confidentiality of various segments of the conver-

TAPES, From A1

sations, especially any that might touch upon "military, diplomatic or sensitive national security secrets."

White House deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said the President was working "alone" on various tapes and companion documents that have been subpoenaed, and noting sections that he wants Sirica to withhold.

Warren said Mr. Nixon was not "occupying himself 100 per cent with this task," but he did postpone until yesterday afternoon a scheduled morning meeting with Treasury Secretary William E. Simon, who had just returned from a trip to the Middle East.

The President had already reviewed the 20 tapes surrendered yesterday, all of them involving meetings and phone calls in March and April of 1973 with one or another of four former aides: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, John W. Dean III and Charles W. Colson.

Portions of each of these conversations have already been made public in White House-censored transcripts, but the full recordings have never before left the President's custody.

St. Clair delivered the original six-hour reels containing the 20 conversations at a formal hearing before Sirica that started just 12 minutes before the court-appointed 4 p.m. deadline.

The White House lawyer plucked them one by one out of a cardboard box, telling Sirica with a smile that "I'm going to have to ask your honor for a receipt."

Sirica suggested that he hearing, St. Clair agreed, settle for a transcript of the

The President's lawyer said the White House index setting out the segments of the 20 tapes that Mr. Nixon still regards as privileged would not be ready until this afternoon. The White House, St. Clair said, also has yet to complete the search for related notes and

memoranda that Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson might have made following the meetings.

Assistant Prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste reminded the court that Mr. Nixon's notes ought to be checked, too, since they "would also be covered by the subpoena." St. Clair promised to do that, too. He told newsmen

The former White House counsel contends that the recordings are likely to contain evidence that would show he was "an agent and subagent rather than principal" in the cover-up conspiracy.

Dean faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. His attorneys suggested that

were the subject of a proposed out-of-court settlement that Mr. Nixon considered in May, but then vetoed after listening to at least some of the recordings.

St. Clair yesterday gave the judge copies of each of the 20 subpoenaed conversations involved in the first turnover along with the original six-hour reels.

later that Dean's notes would also be reviewed.

Dean, who pleaded guilty last fall to conspiring to block the original Watergate investigation, is scheduled to be sentenced by Sirica at 10 a.m. Friday. However, Dean's lawyers have asked for a postponement until the judge completes his review of all 64 subpoenaed tapes.

the tapes might shore up his hopes for leniency.

The judge reserved any decision until Friday. St. Clair is also scheduled to return to Sirica's courtroom at the same time with a "substantial" batch of the next 13 recordings on the Watergate prosecution force's priority list.

All but one of these 13

After St. Clair had recited them one by one, however, prosecutor Ben-Veniste noted that the reel containing the April 17, 1973, conversation between Mr. Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman was listed by the Secret Service as having run out at 4:20 p.m. that day.

The meeting itself lasted,

according to White House logs, from 3:50 p.m. to 4:35 p.m.

St. Clair gave Sirica another reel, presumably picking up at some point after 4:20 p.m., but he said he could not immediately tell just how quickly Secret Service technicians who manned the recording equipment made the change-over,



President Nixon chats with reporters during photo session before his meeting with Treasury Secretary William E. Simon, which was delayed because Mr. Nixon was reviewing tapes to be turned over to Judge Sirica.

Photos by Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post