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# Nixon Calls Top Aides to Camp David

## New Tapes 'Damaging'

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Unreleased White House tape recordings contain information potentially damaging to President Nixon, according to informed White House sources, and have compounded the problems of his defense against impeachment and removal from office.

If Mr. Nixon is to save his presidency, the sources said, he must devise a new strategy that takes into account the contents and tone of the 64 recorded conversations now being turned over to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica, and the conclusions that will be drawn from them.

According to two of the sources, the President's personal review of the tapes in the past week has not encouraged him.

As a result, they said, the President is now being urged by key aides to adopt a new defense posture in which he would acknowledge some degree of participation in the Watergate cover-up while stressing that he had no intention of breaking the law.

At least four of the recorded conversations add new dimensions to the case against the President already developed by the House Judiciary Committee, according to one high-level White House source.

"All hell will break loose when they come out," the source said, but he refused to discuss the substance of information contained on the tapes.

In addition, other White House sources said last week that the tapes contain

more gaps and unexplained silences, some of which occur in the midst of critical conversations.

Despite what one source described as the President's "depressing" review of the tapes in the past week, White House aides said this weekend that they expect Mr. Nixon to launch a new public defense and that his

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WATERGATE, From A1 strategy will become known this week.

"He'll come out fighting," one source predicted, adding that key members of the White House staff have been ordered to make a detailed review of all the evidence against the President and develop a rebuttal.

White House aides describe such an upcoming initiative by the President in terms of a last-ditch effort to reduce the margin of impeachment in the House (now conceded as a certainty by presidential assistants) and to bolster Mr. Nixon's deteriorating support in the Senate—particularly among key Republicans and Southern Democrats.

Although the question of the President's resignation has been widely discussed by members of his staff, White House sources said, they expressed doubt that Mr. Nixon would seriously consider such an option before attempting at least one broad new initiative to regain support from the public and members of Congress.

The 64 undisclosed conversations are considered crucial in this effort because of the virtual certainty that they will be subpoenaed by the Senate as evidence in a trial of the President. And, both publicly and privately, influential senators have warned the White House that failure by the President to surrender the tapes to the Senate would almost au-

tomatically assure his conviction and removal from office.

According to several White House sources, consideration is now being given to releasing immminently either edited transcripts or some of the information on the new tapes to the dwindling number of Republican defenders of the President in Congress.

Even though part of their contents might be somewhat damaging substantively, the sources said, such a move could bring three benefits: demonstrate a willingness by the White House to cooperate with the impeachment investigations of House and Senate, publicly present any damaging information in the most uncritical light, and build the framework on Capitol Hill for a new defense strategy.

The 64 taped conversations involve the post-Watergate period between June 20, 1972—three days after the Watergate break-in—and June 4, 1973. All but one of the conversations involve discussions in Mr.

Nixon's office or on the phone with presidential aides H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John W. Dean III or Charles W. Colson. The other conversation is a Nov. 15, 1972, meeting among several presidential aides without the President.

According to four different White House sources, any new strategy adopted by the President is likely to differ markedly in tone and substance from the narrow, anti-impeachment defense conducted by Mr. Nixon's chief counsel, James D. St. Clair.

Similarly, any new strategy is likely to be devoid of the sort of language employed by the White House during the House Judiciary Committee hearings, in which presidential aides described the committee as a "kangaroo court" and Mr. Nixon as the victim of a partisan vendetta.

"The best case was not made on television [during the Judiciary hearings] and now we're going to put it together," one source said yesterday.

Instead of trying to demonstrate that the President did not participate in key aspects of the conspiracy to cover up Watergate—the core of St. Clair's defense thus far—any new strategy might concede some degree of participation, the sources

said but unwittingly by a tortured President unaware of the legal implications of his acts.

Two well-placed sources in the White House said yesterday that the President is going to have to acknowledge wrongdoing, then temper such retrospective judgment with a candid explanation of his motives and objectives.

The crucial problem, according to these two and other, sources, involved the President's actions from March 21, 1973—when he maintains he first learned of the Watergate cover-up—and April 30, 1973, when he received the resignations of three of his top aides—H. R. Bob Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John W. Dean III.

Some of the most damaging evidence against the President is contained in the White House tape recordings of discussions during this period, even in the edited transcripts of those conversations which Mr. Nixon made public. It was during those 40 days that Mr. Nixon is shown on the tapes to be trying to save his aides from indictment and prevent full disclosure

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of the facts of the Watergate affairs.

One White House official, discussing a possible new line of defense, speculated yesterday that it will probably take the following course:

"He (the President) had been informed his top people were involved in obstruction of justice; the President didn't understand what obstruction of justice was, in fact; he moved slowly and clumsily, but he got them out and cleaned house... He turned over the first batch of tapes, the tapes that have done him in. Would a man who intended to break the law make those things public?"

Such an argument is consistent with the White House view that the released presidential tapes are ambiguous.

The President's defenders note that there are times in the transcripts when he openly uses the phrases "covering up" or "stonewalling" to tell aides what he wants done. But at other points in the transcripts, Mr. Nixon repeatedly states that in his view, nothing that was revealed to him, constituted an obstruction of justice.

According to White House

sources, any new strategy would probably rely more on public relations than legal maneuvering. Perhaps significantly, those called to meet with the President at Camp David yesterday included not only St. Clair, but also chief presidential speechwriter Raymond K. Price and speechwriter-strategist Patrick Buchanan.

Their presence, after weeks of being dealt out of the President's Watergate problems, seems to reflect the view of many White House assistants that the President's case has been neither well-stated nor fully presented to the public.

At the same time, the White House has in the past week come to realize the extent of the Republican defections from the President in both the House and Senate.

And White House sources say they can't think of any Republican Senate leader available to mount a defense for Mr. Nixon. "Only (Nebraska Republican Carl Curtis) has a full commitment," one source said.

One Senate Republican leader said last week that there was no realistic way he could support the President unless there is new evidence that is exonerating.

"The President has put too many people out on a limb too many times," the senator said. "The White

House has used up all its goodwill and credibility. Only evidence could help him now."

Many Republican senators said they fear what might be on the new presidential tapes because of early White House statements that the first batch of tapes exonerated the President.

The transcripts of those recordings, however, are generally considered the most damaging evidence against the President now on the public record.

Referring to the 64 additional tape recordings being turned over to the District Court under Supreme Court

order, another Senate Republican said last week: "The smoking pistol could be on one of those tapes, and I'm not going out on a limb and no one else here will until we hear them all."

Describing Mr. Nixon's position, another Republican senator said last week: "There is just no friendship left in the Senate which he can call on . . ."

Concerning a Senate trial of Mr. Nixon, the senator said: "We talk about it like the weather; there's nothing unthinkable about it at all any more . . . The big difference is that the trauma is gone from impeachment and

trial. The argument that the country can't stand the strain is no longer a consideration."

In the House, which is expected to vote impeachment by a large majority, Republican leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona has until now adopted what one colleague called a "no-sell effort one way or the other."

Rhodes, who is expected to announce his decision on impeachment soon, is believed by at least three colleagues to be ready to announce an anti-impeachment stance for himself but say he will not assume an anti-impeachment leadership role

in the House debate.

In effect, the colleagues said that Rhodes will tell other Republicans in the House to make up their own minds and vote their consciences.

To add to the President's problems, Republican National Committee Chairman George Bush has also adopted a posture of apparent neutrality in his dealings with some key House Republicans. According to one source, Bush recently had encouraging words for several of the House Judiciary Committee Republicans who voted to recommend impeachment.

White House sources said that the President may still mount an effort to cut down the expected impeachment majority in the House.

This, the sources said, could only be effective if someone like Rep. Barber B. Conable Jr. (R-N.Y.), one of the most respected House members, would speak out openly against impeachment.

One House Republican said last week: "A snowball against impeachment could develop and be powerful, but all it can do is keep more Republicans in line for the President. This reduces the margin of impeachment."